THE

CORNHILL MAGAZINE.

NEW SERIES, VOL. XVII.

THE

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NEW SERIES

VOL. XVII.

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THE

CORNHILL MAGAZINE.

JULY 1891.

THE NEW RECTOR.

BY THE AUTHOR OF 'THE HOUSE OF THE WOLF.'

CHAPTER I.

'LE ROI EST MORT!'

THE king was dead. But not at once, not until after some short breathing-space, such as was pleasant enough to those whose only concern with the succession lay in the shouting, could the cry of 'Long live the king!' be raised. For a few days there was no rector of Claversham. The living was during this time in abeyance, or in the clouds, or in the lap of the law, or in any strange and inscrutable place you choose to name. It may have been in the prescience of the patron, and, if so, no locality could be more vague, the whereabouts of Lord Dynmore himself, to say nothing of his prescience, being as uncertain as possible. Messrs. Gearns & Baker, his solicitors and agents, should have known as much about his movements as anyone; yet it was their habit to tell one inquirer that his lordship was in the Cordilleras, and another that he was on the slopes of the Andes, and another that he was at the forty-ninth parallel—quite indifferently; these places being all one to Messrs. Gearns & Baker, whose walk in life had lain for so many years about Lincoln's Inn Fields that Clare Market had come to be their ideal of an uncivilised country.

Moreover, if the whereabouts of Lord Dynmore could only be told in words rather far-sounding than definite, there was room for a doubt whether his prescience existed at all. According to his friends, there never was a man whose memory was so notably

eccentric—not weak, but eccentric. And if his memory was impeachable, his prescience—— But we grow wide of the mark. The question being merely where the living of Claversham was during the days which immediately followed Mr. Williams's death, let it be said at once that we do not know.

Mr. Williams was the late incumbent. He had been rector of the little Warwickshire town for nearly forty years; and although his people were ready enough to busy themselves with the question of his successor, he did not lack honour in his death. His had been a placid life, such as suited an indolent and easy-going man. 'Let me sit upon one chair and put up my feet on another, and there I am,' he had once been heard to say; and the town repeated the remark and chuckled over it. There were some who would have had the parish move more quickly, and who talked with a sneer of the old port-wine kind of parson. But these were few. If he had done little good, he had done less evil. He was kindly and open-handed, and he had not an enemy in the parish. He was regretted as much as such a man should be. Besides, people did not die commonly in Claversham. It was but once a year, or twice at the most, that anyone who was anyone passed away. And so when the event did occur the most was made of it in an old-fashioned way. When Mr. Williams passed for the last time into his churchyard, there was no window which did not by shutter or blind mark its respect for him, not a tongue which wagged foul of his memory. And then the shutters were taken down and the blinds pulled up, and everyone, from Mr. Clode, the curate, to the old people at Bourne's Almshouses, who, having no affairs of their own, had the more time to discuss their neighbours', asked, 'Who is to be the new rector?'

On the day of the funeral two of these old pensioners watched the curate's tall form as he came gravely along the opposite side of the street, to fall in at the door of his lodgings with two ladies, one elderly, one young, who were passing so opportunely that it really seemed as if they might have been waiting for him. He and the elder lady—she was so plump of figure, so healthy of eye and cheek, and was dressed besides with such a comfortable richness that it did one good to look at her—began to talk in a subdued, decorous fashion, while the girl listened. He was telling them of the funeral, how well the archdeacon had read the service, and what a crowd of Dissenters had been present, and so on; and at last he came to the important question.

'I hear, Mrs. Hammond,' he said, 'that the living will be given to Mr. Herbert of Easthope, whom you know, I think? To me? Oh, no, I have not, and never had, any expectation of it. Please do not,' he added, with a slight smile and a shake of the head, 'mention such a thing again. Leave me in my content.'

'But why should you not have it?' replied the young lady, with a pleasant persistence. 'Everyone in the parish would be glad if you were appointed. Could we not do something or say something—get up a petition or anything? Lord Dynmore ought, of course, to give it to you. I think some one should tell him what are the wishes of the parish. I do indeed, Mr. Clode.'

She was a very pretty young lady, with bright brown eyes and hair, and rather arch features; and the gentleman she was addressing had long found her face pleasant to look upon. But at this moment it really seemed to him as the face of an angel. Yet his answer spoke only a kind of depressed gratitude. 'Thank you, Miss Hammond,' he said. 'If good wishes could procure me the living, I should have an excellent reason for hoping. But as things are, it is not for me.'

'Pooh! pooh!' said Mrs. Hammond cheerily, 'who knows?' And then, after a few more words, she and her daughter went on their way, and he turned into his rooms.

The old women were still watching. 'I don't well know who'll get it, Peggy,' said one, 'but I be pretty sure of this, as he won't! It isn't his sort as gets 'em. It's the lord's friends, bless you!'

So it appeared that she and Mr. Clode were of one mind on the matter. If that was really Mr. Clode's opinion. But it was when the crow opened its beak that it dropped the piece of cheese, it will be remembered; and so to this day the wise man has no chance or expectation of this or that—until he gets it. And if a patron or a patron's solicitor has for some days had under his paper-weight a letter written in a hand that bears a strange likeness to the wise man's—a letter setting forth the latter's claims and wisdom—what of that? That is a private matter, of course.

Be that as it may, there was scarcely a person in Clavershame who did not give some time that evening, and subsequent evenings too, to the interesting question who was to be the new rector. The rector was a big factor in the town life. Girls wondered whether he would be young, and hoped he would dance. Their mothers were sanguine that he would be unmarried, and their fathers that he would play whist. And one asked whether

he would buy Mr. Williams's stock of port, and another whether he would dine late. And some trusted that he would let things be, and some hoped that he would cleanse the stables. And only one thing was certain and sure and immutably fixed—that, whoever he was, he would not be able to please everybody.

Nay, the ripple of excitement spread far beyond Claversham. Not only at the archdeacon's at Kingsford Carbonel, five miles away among the orchards and hopyards, was there much speculation upon the matter, but even at the Homfrays', at Holberton, ten miles out beyond the Baer Hills, there was talk about it, and bets were made across the billiard-table. And in more distant vicarages and curacies, where the patron was in some degree known, there were flutterings of heart and anxious searchings of the 'Guardian' and Crockford. Those who seemed to have some chance of the living grew despondent, and those who had none talked the thing over with their wives after the children had gone to bed, until they persuaded themselves that they would die at Claversham Rectory. Middle-aged men who had been at college with Lord Dynmore remembered that they had on one occasion rowed in the same boat with him; and young men who had danced with his niece thought secretly that, dear little woman as Emily or Annie was, they might have done better. And a hundred and eleven letters, written by people who knew less than Messrs. Gearns & Baker of the Andes, seeing that they did not know that Lord Dynmore was there or thereabouts, were received at Dynmore Park and forwarded to London, and duly made up into a large parcel with other correspondence by Messrs. Gearns & Baker, and so were despatched to the forty-ninth parallel—or thereabouts.

CHAPTER II.

'VIVE LE ROI!'

It was at the beginning of the second week in October that Mr. Williams died; and, the weather in those parts being peculiarly fine and bright for the time of year, men stood about in the churchyard with bare heads, and caught no colds. And it continued so for some days after the funeral. But not everywhere. Upon a morning, some three perhaps after the ceremony at Claversham, a young gentleman sat down to his breakfast, only a hundred and twenty miles away, under conditions so different—a bitter east

wind, a dense fog, and a general murkiness of atmosphere—that one might have supposed his not over-plentiful meal to be laid in another planet.

The air in the room—a meagrely furnished, much littered room, was yellow and choking. The candles burned dimly in the midst of yellow halos. The fire seemed only to smoulder, and the owner of the room had to pay some attention to it before he sat down and found a letter lying beside his plate. He glanced at it doubtfully. 'I do not know the handwriting,' he muttered. 'It is not a subscription, for subscriptions never come in an east wind. I am afraid it is a bill.'

The letter was addressed to the Rev. Reginald Lindo, St. Barnabas' Mission House, 383 East India Dock Road, London, E. After scrutinising it for a moment, he pulled a candle towards him and tore open the envelope.

He read the letter slowly, his tea cup at his lips, and, though he was alone, his face grew crimson. When he had finished the note he turned back and read it again, and then flung it down and, starting up, began to walk the room. 'What a boy I am!' he muttered. 'But it is almost incredible. Upon my honour it is almost incredible!'

He was still at the height of his excitement, now sitting down to take a mouthful of breakfast and now leaping up to pace the room, when his housekeeper entered and said that a woman from Tamplin's Rents wanted to see him.

'What does she want, Mrs. Baxter?' he asked.

'Husband is dying, sir,' the old lady replied briefly.

'Do you know her at all?'

'No, sir. But she is as poor a piece as I have ever seen. She says that she could not have come out, for want of clothes, if it had not been for the fog. And they are not particular here, as I know, the hussies!'

'Say that I shall be ready to go with her in less than five minutes,' the young clergyman answered. 'And here! Give her some tea, Mrs. Baxter. The pot is half full.'

He bustled about; but nevertheless the message and the business he was now upon had sobered him, and as he buttoned up the letter in his breast-pocket, his face was grave. He was a tall young man, fair, with regular features, and curling hair cut rather short. His eyes were blue and pleasantly bold; and in his every action and in his whole carriage there was a great appearance of

confidence and self-possession. Taking a book and a small case from a side-table, he put on his overcoat and went out. A moment, and the dense fog swallowed him up, and with him the tattered bundle of rags, which had a husband, and very likely had nothing else in the world.

Tamplin's Rents not affecting us, we may skip a few hours, and then go westward with him as far as the Temple, which in the East India Dock Road is considered very far west indeed by those who have ever heard of it. Here Lindo sought a dingy staircase in Fig-tree Court, and, mounting to the second floor, stopped before a door which was adorned by about a dozen names, painted in white on a black ground. He knocked loudly, and, a small boy answering his summons with great alacrity and importance, asked for Mr. Smith, and was promptly ushered into a room about nine feet square, in which, at a table covered with papers and open books, sat a small dark-complexioned man, very keen and eager in appearance, who looked up with an air of annoyance.

'Who is it, Fred?' he said impatiently, moving one of the candles, which the fog still rendered necessary, although it was high noon. 'I am engaged at present.'

'Mr. Lindo to see you, sir,' the boy announced, with a formality funny enough in a groom of the chambers about four feet high.

The little man's countenance instantly changed, and he jumped up grinning. 'Is it you, old boy?' he said. 'Sit down, old fellow! I thought it might be my one solicitor, and it is well to be prepared, you know.'

'You are not really busy?' said the visitor, looking at him doubtfully.

'Well, I am and I am not,' replied Mr. Smith; and, deftly tipping aside the books, he disclosed some slips of manuscript. 'It is an article for the "CORNHILL,"' he continued; 'but whether it will ever appear there is another matter. You have come to lunch, of course? And now, what is your news?'

He was so quick and eager that he reminded people who saw him for the first time of a rat. When they came to know him better, they found that a stauncher friend than Jack Smith was not to be found in the Temple. With this he had the reputation of being a clever, clear-headed man, and his sound common sense was almost a proverb. Observing that Lindo did not answer him, he continued, 'Is anything amiss, old man?'

'Well, not quite amiss,' Lindo answered, his face flushing a

little. 'But the fact is'—taking the letter from his breast-pocket —'that I have received the offer of a living, Jack.'

Smith leapt up and clapped his friend on the shoulder. 'By Jove! old man,' he exclaimed heartily, 'I am glad of it! Very glad of it! You have had enough of that slumming. But I hope it is a better living than mine,' he continued, with a comical glance round the tiny room. 'Let us have a look! What is it? Two hundred and a house?'

Lindo handed the letter to him. It was written from Lincoln's Inn Fields, and was dated the preceding day. It ran thus:

'Dear Sir,—We are instructed by our client, the Right Honourable the Earl of Dynmore, to invite your acceptance of the living of Claversham in the county of Warwick, vacant by the death on the 15th instant of the Rev. John Williams, the late incumbent. The living, of which his lordship is the patron, is a town rectory, of the approximate value of 810*l.* per annum and a house. Our client is travelling in the United States, but we have the requisite authority to proceed in due form and without delay, which in this matter is prejudicial. We beg to have the pleasure of receiving your acceptance at as early a date as possible,

'And remain, dear Sir,

'Your obedient servants,

'GEARNS & BAKER.

'To the Rev. Reginald Lindo, M.A.'

The barrister read this letter with even greater surprise than the other expected, and, when he had done, looked at his companion with wondering eyes. 'Claversham!' he ejaculated. 'Why, I know it well!'

'Do you? Well, I believe I have heard you mention it.'

'I knew old Williams!' Jack continued, still in amaze. 'Knew him well, and heard of his death, but little thought you were likely to succeed him. My dear fellow, it is a wonderful piece of good fortune! Wonderful! I shake you by the hand! I congratulate you heartily! But how did you come to know the high and mighty earl? Unbosom yourself, my dear boy!'

'I do not know him—do not know him from Adam!' replied the young clergyman gravely.

'You don't mean it?'

'I do. I have never seen him in my life.'

Jack Smith whistled. 'Are you sure it is not a hoax?' he said, with a serious face, and in a different tone.

'I think not,' the rector elect replied. 'Perhaps I have given you a wrong impression. I have had nothing to do with the earl; but my uncle was his tutor.'

'Oh!' said Smith slowly, 'that makes all the difference. What uncle?'

'You have heard me speak of him. He was vicar of St. Gabriel's, Aldgate. He died about a year ago—last October, I think. Lord Dynmore and he were good friends, and my uncle used often to stay at his place in Scotland. I suppose my name must have come up some time when they were talking.'

'Likely enough,' assented the lawyer. 'But for the earl to remember it, he must be one in a hundred!'

'It is certainly very good of him,' Lindo replied, his cheek flushing. 'If it had been a small country living, and my uncle had been alive to jog his elbow, I should not have been so much surprised.'

'And you are just twenty-five!' Jack Smith observed, leaning back in his chair, and eyeing his friend with undisguised and whimsical admiration. 'You will be the youngest rector in the Clergy List, I should think! And Claversham! By Jove, what a berth!'

A queer expression of annoyance for a moment showed itself in Lindo's face. 'I say, Jack, stow that!' he said gently, and with a little shamefacedness. 'I mean,' he continued, looking down and smoothing the nap on his hat, 'that I do not want to regard it altogether in that way, and I do not want others to regard it so.'

'As a berth, you mean?' Jack said gravely, but with a twinkle in his eyes.

'Well, from the loaves and fishes point of view,' Lindo answered, beginning to walk up and down the room in some excitement. 'I do not think an officer, when he gets promotion, looks only at the increase in his pay. Of course I am glad that it is a good living, and that I shall have a house, and a tolerable position, and all that. But I declare to you, Jack, believe me or not as you like, that if I did not feel that I could do the work as I hope, please Heaven, to do it, I would not take it up—I would not, indeed. As it is, I feel the responsibility. I have been thinking about it as I walked down here, and upon my honour for a while I thought I ought to decline it.'

'I would not do that!' said Gallio, dismissing the twinkle from his eyes, and really respecting his old friend, perhaps, a little more

than before. 'You are not the man, I think, to shun either work or responsibility. Did I tell you,' he continued in a different tone, 'that I had an uncle at Claversham?'

'No,' said Lindo.

'Yes, and I think he is one of your churchwardens. His name is Bonamy, and he is a solicitor. His London agent is my only client,' Jack said jerkily.

'And he is one of the churchwardens! Well, that is strange—and jolly!'

'Umph! Don't you be too sure of that!' retorted the barrister sharply. 'He is a—well, he has been very good to me, and he is my uncle, and I am not going to say anything against him. But I am not quite sure that I should like him for my churchwarden. *Your* churchwarden! Why, it is like a fairy tale, old fellow!'

And so it seemed to Lindo when, an hour later, the small boy, with the same portentous gravity of face, let him out and bade him good-day. As the young parson started eastwards, along Fleet Street first, he looked at the moving things round him with new eyes, from a new standpoint, with a new curiosity. The passers-by were the same, but he was changed. He had lunched, and perhaps the material view of his position was uppermost, for those in the crowd who particularly observed the tall young clergyman noticed in his bearing an air of calm importance and a strong sense of personal dignity, which led him to shun collisions, and even to avoid jostling his fellows, with peculiar care. In truth he had all the while before his eyes, as he walked, an announcement which was destined to appear in the 'Guardian' of the following week:

'The Rev. Reginald Lindo, M.A., St. Barnabas' Mission, London, to be Rector of Claversham. Patron, the Earl of Dynmore.'

CHAPTER III.

AN AWKWARD MEETING.

A FORTNIGHT after this paragraph in the 'Guardian' had filled Claversham with astonishment and Mr. Clode with a modest thankfulness that he was spared the burden of office, a little dark man—Jack Smith, in fact—drove briskly into Paddington Station

He disregarded the offers of the porters, who stand waiting on the hither side of the journey like Charon by the Styx, and see at a glance who has the obolus, and, springing from his hansom without assistance, bustled on to the platform.

Here he looked up and down as if he expected to meet some one, and then, glancing at the clock, found that he had a quarter of an hour to spare. He made at once for the bookstall, and, with a lavishness which would have surprised some of his friends, bought 'Punch,' a little volume by Howells, the 'Standard,' and finally, though he blushed as he asked for it, the 'Queen.' He had just gathered his purchases together and was paying for them, when a high-pitched voice at his elbow made him start. 'Why, Jack! what in the world are you buying all those papers for?' it said. The speaker was a girl about thirteen years old, who in the hubbub had stolen unnoticed to his side.

'Hullo, Daintry!' he answered. 'Why did you not say before that you were here? I have been looking for you. Where is Kate? Oh, yes, I see her,' as a young lady turning over books at the farther end of the stall acknowledged his presence by a laughing nod. 'You are here in good time,' he went on to the younger girl, who affectionately slipped her arm through his.

'Yes,' she said. 'Your mother started us early. And so you have come to see us off, after all, Jack?'

'Just so,' he answered dryly. 'Let us go to Kate.'

They did so, the young lady meeting them halfway. 'How kind of you to be here, Jack!' she said. 'As you have come, will you look us out a comfortable compartment? That is the train over there. And please to put this and this and Daintry's parcel in the corners for us.'

This and this were a cloak and a shawl, and a few little matters in brown paper. In order to possess himself of them, Jack handed Kate the papers he was carrying.

'Are they for me?' she said, gratefully indeed, but with a placid gratitude which was not perhaps what the donor wanted. 'Oh, thank you. And this too? What is it?'

'"Their Wedding Journey,"' said Jack, with a tiny twinkle in his eyes.

'Is it pretty?' she answered dubiously. 'It sounds silly; but you are supposed to be a judge. I think I should like "A Chance Acquaintance" better, though.'

Of course the little book was changed, and Jack winced. But

he had not time to think much about it, for he had to bustle away through the rising babel to secure seats for them in an empty compartment of the Oxford train, and see their luggage labelled and put in. This done, he hurried back, and, bringing them to the spot, pointed out the places he had taken. But Kate stopped short. 'Oh, dear, they are in a through carriage,' she said, eyeing the board over the door.

'Yes,' he answered. 'I thought that that was what you wanted.'

'No, I would rather go in another carriage, and change. We shall get to Claversham soon enough without travelling with Claversham people.'

'Indeed we shall,' Daintry chimed in imperiously. 'Let us go and find seats, and Jack will bring the things after us.'

He assented meekly—very meekly for sharp Jack Smith—and presently came along with his arms full of parcels, to find them ensconced in the nearer seats of a compartment which contained one other passenger, a gentleman who was already deep in the 'Times.' Jack, standing at the open door, could not see his face, for it was hidden by the newspaper, but he could see that his legs wore a youthful and reckless air; and he raised his eyebrows interrogatively. 'Pooh!' Daintry whispered in answer. 'How stupid you are! It is all right. I can see he is a clergyman by his boots!'

Jack smiled at this assurance, and, putting in the things he was holding, shut the door and stood outside, looking from the platform about him, on which all was flurry and confusion, to the interior of the carriage, which seemed in comparison peaceful and homelike. 'I think I will come with you to Westbourne Park,' he said suddenly.

'Nonsense, Jack!' Kate replied, with crushing decision. 'We shall be there in five minutes, and you will have all the trouble of returning for nothing.'

He acquiesced meekly—very meekly for Jack Smith. 'Well,' he said, with a new effort at cheerfulness, 'you will soon be at home, girls. Remember me to the governor. I am afraid you will be rather dull at first. You will have one scrap of excitement, however.'

'What is that?' said Kate, very much as if she were prepared to depreciate it before she heard what it was.

'The new rector!'

'He will make very little difference to us!' the girl answered, with an accent almost of scorn. 'Papa said in his letter that he thought it was a great pity a local man had not been appointed—some one who knew the place and the old ways. Of course, knowing him, you say he is clever and nice; but either way it will not affect us much.'

No one remarked that the 'Times' newspaper in the far corner of the compartment rustled suspiciously, or that the clerical boots became agitated on a sudden, as though their wearer meditated a move; and, in ignorance of this, 'I expect I shall hate him!' Daintry said calmly.

'Come, you must not do that,' Jack remonstrated. 'You must remember that he is not only a very good fellow, but a great friend of mine, Daintry.'

'Then we ought indeed to spare him!' Kate said frankly, 'for you have been very good to us and made our visit delightful.'

His face flushed with pleasure even at those simple words of praise. 'You will write and tell me,' he continued eagerly, 'that you have reached your journey's end safely.'

'One of us will,' was the answer. 'Daintry,' Kate went on calmly, 'will you remind me to write to Jack to-morrow evening?'

His face fell sadly. So little would have made him happy. He looked down and kicked the step of the carriage, and made a little moan to himself before he spoke again. 'Good-bye,' he said then. 'They are coming to look at your tickets. You should leave in one minute. Good-bye, Daintry.'

'Good-bye, Jack. Come and see us soon,' she cried earnestly, as she released his hand.

'Good-bye, Kate.' Alas! Kate's cheek did not show the slightest consciousness that his clasp was more than cousinly. She uttered her 'Good-bye, Jack, and thank so much,' very kindly, but her colour never varied by the quarter of a tone, and her grasp was as firm and as devoid of shyness as his own.

He had not much time to be miserable, however, for, the ticket-collector coming to the window, he had to fall back, and in doing so made a discovery. Kate, hunting for her ticket in one of those mysterious places in which ladies will put tickets, heard him utter an exclamation, and asked, 'What is it, Jack?'

He did not answer, but, to her surprise, the collector having by this time disappeared, he stretched his hand through the window to some one beyond her. 'Why, Lindo!' he cried, 'is

that you? I had not a notion of your identity. Of course you are going down to take possession.'

Kate, trembling already with a horrible presentiment, turned her head quickly. Her fears were well-grounded. It was the clergyman in the corner who answered Jack's greeting and rose to shake hands with him, the train being already in motion. 'I did not recognise your voice out there,' the stranger said, his cheek hot, his manner constrained.

'No? And I did not know you were going down to-day,' Jack answered, walking beside the train. 'Let me introduce you to my cousins, Miss Bonamy and Daintry. I am sorry that I did not see you before. Good luck to you! Good-bye, Kate; good-bye!'

The train was moving faster and faster, and Jack was soon left behind on the platform gazing pathetically at the black tunnel which had swallowed it up. In the carriage there was silence, and in the heart of one at least of the passengers the most horrible vexation. Kate could have bitten out her tongue. She was conscious that the clergyman had bowed in acknowledgment of Jack's introduction and had muttered something. But after that he had sunk back in his corner, his face wearing, as it seemed to her, a frown of scornful annoyance. Even if nothing awkward had been said, she would still have shunned for a reason best known to herself such a meeting as this with a new clergyman who did not yet know Claversham. But now she had aggravated the matter by her heedlessness. She had made a hopeless *faux pas*, and she sat angry, and yet ashamed, with her lips pressed together and her eyes fixed upon the opposite cushion.

For the Rev. Reginald, he was by no means indifferent to the criticisms he had unfortunately overheard. Always possessed of a fairly good opinion of himself, he had lately been raising his standard to the rectorial height; and, being very human, he had come to think himself something of a personage. If Jack Smith had introduced him under circumstances as unlucky to his aunt, there is no saying how far the acquaintance would have progressed or how long the new incumbent might have fretted and fumed. But presently he stole a look at Kate Bonamy and melted.

She was slightly above the middle height, graceful and rounded of figure, with a grave stateliness of carriage which oddly became her. Her complexion was rather pale, but it was clear and healthy, and there was even a freckle here and a freckle there

which I never heard a man say that he would have had elsewhere. If her face was a trifle long, with nose a little aquiline and curving lips too wide, yet it was a fair and dainty face, such as Englishmen love. The brown hair, which strayed on to the broad white brow and hung in a heavy loop upon her neck, had a natural waviness—the sole beauty on which she prided herself. For she could not see her eyes as others saw them—big grey eyes that from under long lashes looked out upon you, full of such purity and truth that men meeting their gaze straightway felt a desire to be better men and went away and tried—for half an hour. Such was Kate outwardly. Inwardly she had faults of course, and perhaps pride and a little temper were two of them.

The rector was still admiring her askance, surprised to find that Jack Smith, who was not very handsome himself, had such a cousin, when Daintry roused him abruptly. For some moments she had been gazing at him, as at some unknown specimen—with no attempt to hide her interest. Now she said suddenly, 'You are the new rector?'

He answered stiffly that he was; being a good deal taken aback at being challenged in that way. Remonstrance, however, was out of the question, and Daintry for the moment said no more, though her gaze, as she sat curled up in her corner of the carriage, lost none of its embarrassing directness.

But presently she began again. 'I should think the dogs would like you,' she said deliberately, and much as if he had not been there to hear; 'you look as if they would.'

Silence again. The rector, gazing at the opposite cushions, smiled fatuously. What was a beneficed clergyman, whose dignity was young and tender, to do, subjected to the criticism of unknown dogs? He tried to divert his thoughts by considering the pretty sage-green frock and the grey fur cape and hat to match which the elder girl was wearing. Doubtless she was taking the latest fashions down to Claversham, and fur capes and hats, indefinitely and mysteriously multiplying, would listen to him on Sundays from all the nearest pews. And Daintry was silent so long that he thought he had done with her. But no. 'Do you think that you will like Claversham?' she asked, with an air of serious curiosity.

'I trust I shall,' he said, a flush rising to his cheek.

She took a moment to consider the answer conscientiously, and, thinking badly of it, remarked gravely, 'I don't think you will.'

This was unbearable. The clergyman, full of a nervous dread

lest the next question should be, 'Do you think that they will like you at Claversham?' made a great show of resuming his newspaper. Kate, possessed by the same fear, shot an imploring glance at Daintry; but, seeing that the latter had only eyes for the stranger, hoped desperately for the best.

Which was very bad. 'It must be jolly,' remarked the unconscious tormentor, 'to have eight hundred pounds a year, and be a rector!'

'Daintry!' Kate cried in horror.

'Why, what is the matter?' Daintry asked, turning suddenly to her sister with wide-open eyes.

Her look of aggrieved astonishment overcame Lindo's gravity, and he laughed aloud. He was not without a charming sense, still novel enough to be pleasing, that Daintry was right. It was jolly to be a rector and have eight hundred a year!

The laugh came in happily. It swept away the cobwebs of embarrassment which had lain so thickly about two of the party. Lindo began to talk pleasantly, pointing out this or that reach of the river, and Kate, meeting his cheery eyes, put aside a faint idea of apologising which had been in her head, and replied frankly. He told them tales of summer voyages between lock and lock, of long days idly spent in the Wargrave marshes; and, as the identification of Mapledurham and Pangbourne and Wittenham and Goring rendered it necessary that they should all cross and recross the carriage, they were soon on excellent terms with one another, or would have been if the rector had not still detected in Kate's manner a slight stiffness for which he could not account. It puzzled him also to observe that, though they were ready, Daintry more particularly, to discuss the amusements of London and the goodness of Cousin Jack, they both grew reticent when the conversation turned towards Claversham and its affairs.

At Oxford he stepped out to go to the bookstall. 'Jack was right,' said Daintry, looking after him. 'He *is* nice.'

'Yes,' her sister allowed, rising and sitting down again in a restless fashion. 'But I wish we had not fallen in with him, all the same.'

'It cannot be helped now,' said Daintry, who was evidently prepared to accept the event with philosophy.

Not so the elder girl. 'We might go into another carriage,' she suggested.

'That would be rude,' said Daintry calmly.

The question was decided for them by the young clergyman's return. He came along the platform, an animated look in his eyes. 'Miss Bonamy,' he said, stopping at the open door with his hand extended, 'there is some one in the refreshment-room whom I think that you would like to see. Mr. Gladstone is there, talking to the Duke of Westminster, and they are both eating buns like common mortals. Will you come and take a peep at them?'

'I don't think that we have time,' she objected.

'There is sure to be time,' Daintry cried. 'Now, Kate, come!' And she was down upon the platform in a moment.

'The train is not due out for five minutes yet,' Lindo said, as he piloted them through the crowd to the doorway. 'There, on the left by the fireplace,' he added.

Kate glanced, and turned away satisfied. Not so Daintry. With rapt attention in her face, she strayed nearer and nearer to the great men, her eyes growing larger with each step.

'She will be speaking to them next,' said Kate, in a fidget.

'Perhaps asking Mr. Gladstone if he likes Downing Street,' Lindo suggested slyly. 'There, she is coming now,' he added, as Miss Daintry turned and came to them at last.

'I wanted to make sure,' she said simply, seeing Kate's impatience, 'that I should know them again. That was all.'

'Quite so, and I hope you have succeeded,' Kate answered dryly. 'But, if we are not quick, we shall miss our train.' And she led the way back with more speed than dignity.

'There is plenty of time—plenty of time,' Lindo answered, following them. He could not bear to see her pushing her way through the mixed crowd, and accepting so easily a footing of equality with it. He was one of those men to whom their womenkind are sacred. He took his time, therefore, and followed at his ease; only to see, when he emerged from the press, a long stretch of empty platform, three porters, and the tail of a departing train. 'Good gracious!' he stammered, halting suddenly, with dismay in his face. 'What does this mean?'

'It means,' Kate answered, in an accent of sharp annoyance—she did not intend to spare him—'that you have made us miss our train, Mr. Lindo. And there is not another which reaches Claversham to-day!'

CHAPTER IV.

BIRDS IN THE WILDERNESS.

'THERE! Whose fault was that?' said Daintry, turning from the departing train.

The young rector could not deny it was his. He would have given anything for at least the appearance of being undisturbed; but the blood rose to his cheek, and in his attempt to maintain his dignity he only succeeded in looking angry as well as confused and taken aback. He had certainly made a mess of his escort duty. What in the world had led him to go out of his way to make a fool of himself? he wondered. And with these Claversham people!

'There may be a special train to-day,' Kate suggested suddenly. She had got over her first vexation, and perhaps repented that she had betrayed it so openly. 'Or we may be allowed to go on by a luggage train, Mr. Lindo. Will you kindly see?'

He snatched at the relief which her proposal held out to him, and strode away to inquire. But almost at once he was back again. 'It is most vexatious!' he said, with loud indignation. 'It is only three o'clock, and yet there is no way of getting to Claversham to-night! I am very sorry, but I never dreamed the company managed things so badly. Never!'

'No,' said Kate drily.

He winced and looked at her sharply, his vanity hurt again. But then he found that he could not keep it up. No doubt it was a ridiculous position for a beneficed clergyman, on his way to undertake the work of his life, to be delayed at a station with two girls; but, after all, for a young man to be angry with a young woman who is also pretty—well, the task is difficult. 'I am afraid,' he said, looking at her shyly, and yet with a kind of frankness, 'that I have brought you into trouble, Miss Bonamy. As your sister says, it was my fault. Is it a matter of great consequence that you should reach home to-night?'

'I am afraid that my father will be vexed,' she answered.

'You must telegraph to him,' he rejoined. 'I am afraid that is all I can suggest. And that done, you will have only one thing to consider—whether we shall stay the night here or go on to Birmingham and stay there.'

Kate looked at him, her grey eyes full of trouble, and did not at once answer. He had clearly made up his mind to join his fortunes to theirs, while she, on her side, had private reasons for shrinking from intimacy with him. But he seemed to consider it so much a matter of course that they should remain together and travel together, that she scarcely saw how to put things on a different footing. She knew, too, that she would get no help from Daintry, who already regarded their detention in the light of a capital joke.

'What are you going to do yourself, Mr. Lindo?' she said at last, her manner rather chilling.

He opened his eyes and smiled. 'You discard me, then?' he said. 'You have lost all faith in me, Miss Bonamy, and will go no farther with me? Well, I deserve it after the scrape into which I have led you.'

'I did not mean that,' she answered. 'I wished to know if you had formed any plans.'

'Yes,' he replied—'to make amends, if you will let me take command of the party. We will stay in Oxford, and I will show you round the colleges.'

'No!' exclaimed Daintry. 'Will you? How jolly! And then?'

'We will dine at the Mitre,' he answered, smiling, 'if Miss Bonamy will permit me to manage everything. And then, if you leave here at nine-thirty to-morrow you will be at Claversham soon after twelve. Will that suit you?'

Daintry's face answered sufficiently for her. As for Kate, she was in a difficulty. She knew little of hotels: yet they must stop somewhere, and no doubt Mr. Lindo would take a great deal of trouble off her hands. But would it be proper to do as he proposed? She really did not know—only that it sounded odd. That it would not be wise she knew. She could answer that question at once. But how could she explain, and how tell him to go his way and leave them? And, after all, to see Oxford would be delightful; and he really was very pleasant, very different from the men she knew at home. 'You are very good,' she said at length, with a grateful sigh—'if we have no choice but between Oxford and Birmingham.'

'And no choice of guides at all,' he said, smiling, 'you will take me.'

'Yes,' she answered, looking away rather primly.

Her reserve, however, did not last. Once through the station gates, that free holiday feeling which we have all experienced on being set down in an unknown town, with no duty before us save to explore it, soon possessed her; while he wished nothing better than to play the showman—a part we love. The day was fine and bright, though cold. She had eyes for beauty and a soul for the past, and soon forgot herself; and he, piloting the sisters through Magdalen Walks, now strewn with leaves, or displaying with pride the staircase of Christchurch, the quaint library of Merton, or the ancient front of John's, forgot himself also, and especially his new-born dignity, in which he had lived rather too much, perhaps, during the last three weeks. He showed himself in his true colours—the colours known to his intimate friends—and grew so bright and cheery that Kate found herself talking to him in utter forgetfulness of his position and theirs. The girl sighed frankly when darkness fell and they had to go into the house, their curiosity still unsated.

She thought it was all over. But no, there was a cheery fire awaiting them in the 'House' room (he had looked in for a few minutes on their arrival and given his orders); and before it a little table laid for three was sparkling with plate and glass. Nay, there were two cups of tea ready on a side-table, for it wanted an hour yet of dinner-time. Altogether, as Daintry naïvely told him, 'even Jack could not have made it nicer for us.'

'Jack is a favourite of yours?' he said, laughing.

'I should think so!' Daintry answered, in wonder. 'There is no one like Jack.'

'After that I shall take myself off,' he replied. 'Seriously, I want to call on a friend, Miss Bonamy. But if I may join you at dinner——'

'Oh, do!' she said impulsively. Then, more shyly, she added, 'We shall be very glad if you will, I am sure.'

He felt singularly light-hearted and pleased with himself as he turned the windy corner of the Broad. It was pleasant to be in Oxford again, a beneficed clergyman. Pleasant to have such a future to look forward to, such a holiday moment to enjoy. Pleasant to anticipate the cheery meal and the girl's smile, half shy, half grateful. And Kate? She remained before the fire, saying little because Daintry's tongue gave few openings, but thinking a good deal. Once she did speak. 'It won't last,' she said pettishly.

'Why, Kate?' Daintry protested. 'Do you think he will be different at Claversham?'

'Of course he will!' She spoke with a little scorn in her voice, and that sort of decision which we use when we wish to crush down our own unwarranted hopes.

'But he *is* nice,' Daintry persisted. 'You do think so, Kate, don't you?'

'Oh, yes, he is very nice,' she said drily. 'But he will be in the Hammond set at home, and we shall see nothing of him.'

But presently he was back, and then Kate found it impossible to resist the charm. He ladled the soup and dispensed the mutton chops with a gaiety and boyish glee which were really the stored-up effervescence of weeks, the ebullition of the long-repressed delight which he took in his promotion. He learned casually that the girls had been in London for more than a month, staying with Jack's mother in Bayswater, and that they were by no means well pleased to be upon their road home.

'And yet,' he said—this was towards the end of dinner—'I have been told that your town is a very picturesque one. But I fancy that we never appreciate our home as we do a place strange to us.'

'Very likely that is so,' Kate answered quietly. And then a little pause ensued, such as he had observed several times before, and come to connect with any mention of Claversham. The girls' tongues would run on frankly and pleasantly enough about their London visit, or Mr. Gladstone; but let him bring the talk round to his parish and its people, and forthwith something of reserve seemed to come between him and them until the conversation strayed afield again.

After the others had finished he still toyed with his meal, partly in lazy enjoyment of the time, partly as an excuse for staying with them. They were sitting in a momentary silence, when a boy passed the window chanting a ditty at the top of his voice. The doggrel came clearly to their ears—

> Here we sit like birds in the wilderness,
> Birds in the wilderness, birds in the wilderness;
> Here we sit like birds in the wilderness,
> Samuel asking for more.

As the sound passed on the young man looked up, a mischievous twinkle in his eyes, and met their eyes, and all three burst into a merry peal of laughter. They were the birds in the

wilderness, sitting there in the little circle of light, in the strange room in the strange town, almost as intimate as if they had known one another for years, or had been a week at sea together.

But Kate, having acknowledged by that pleasant outburst her sense of the oddity of the position, rose from the table; and the rector had to say good-night, explaining at the same time that he should not travel with them next morning, but intended to go on by a later train, as his friend wished to see more of him. Nevertheless, he said he should be up to breakfast with them and should see them off. And in this resolution he persisted, notwithstanding Kate's protest, which perhaps was not very violent.

Nevertheless, he was a little late next morning, and when he came down he found them already seated in the coffee-room. There were others breakfasting here and there in the room, chiefly upon toast-racks and newspapers, and he did not at once observe that the gentleman standing with his back set negligently against the mantelshelf was talking to Kate. Arrived at the table, however, he saw that it was so; and the cheery greeting on his lips faded into a commonplace 'Good morning, Miss Bonamy.' He took no apparent notice of the stranger as he added, 'I am afraid I am rather late.'

The intruder, a short dark-whiskered man between thirty and forty, seemed to the full as much surprised by the clergyman's appearance as Lindo was by his; and, moreover, to be as little able to hide the feeling as Kate herself to control the colour which rose in her cheeks. She gave Mr. Lindo his tea in silence, and then with an obvious effort introduced the two men. 'This is Dr. Gregg of Claversham—Mr. Lindo,' she said.

Lindo rose and shook hands. 'Mr. Lindo the younger, I presume?' said the doctor, with a bow and a careless gesture intended to show that he was quite at his ease.

'The only one, I am afraid,' replied the rector, smiling. Though he by no means liked the look of his new friend.

'Did I rightly catch your name?' was the answer—'"Mr. Lindo?"'

'Yes,' said the rector again, opening his eyes in some surprise.

'But you are not—you do not mean to say that you are the new rector?' pronounced the dark man abruptly, and with a kind of aggressiveness which seemed his most striking quality—'the rector of Claversham, I mean?'

'I believe so,' said Lindo quietly. 'You want some more

water, do you not, Miss Bonamy?' he continued. 'Let me ring the bell.' He rose and crossed the room to do so. The truth was, he hated the newcomer already. The man's first sentence had been enough. His manner was not the manner of the men with whom Lindo had mixed, and the rector felt almost angry with Kate for introducing Gregg—albeit his parishioner—to him, and quite angry with her for suffering the doctor to address her with the familiarity he seemed to affect.

And Kate, her eyes downcast, knew by instinct how it was with him, and what he was thinking. 'I have been telling Dr. Gregg,' she said hurriedly, when he returned, 'how we missed our train yesterday.'

'Rather how I missed it for you,' Lindo answered gravely, devoting himself to his breakfast.

'Ah, yes, it was very funny!' the doctor fired off, watching each mouthful they ate. Daintry had finished, and was sitting back in her chair kicking the leg of the table monotonously; not in the best of tempers apparently. 'Very funny indeed!' the doctor continued. 'An accident, I hope?' with a little sniggling laugh.

'Yes!' said the rector, looking up at him with a black brow and steadfast eyes—'it was an accident.'

Gregg was a little cowed by the look, and in a moment, with a muttered word or two, fidgeted himself away, cursing the general superciliousness of parsons and the quiet airs of this one in particular. He was a little dog-in-the-mangerish man, ill-bred, and, like most ill-bred men, resentful of breeding in others. The fact that he had a sneaking liking for Kate did not tend to lessen his disgustful wonder how the Bonamy girls and the new rector came to be travelling together—which, indeed, to any Claversham person would have seemed a portent. But, then, Lindo did not know that.

The objectionable item removed, and the temptation to remark upon him overcome, Lindo soon recovered his good temper, and rattled away so pleasantly that the train time seemed to all of them to come very quickly. 'There,' he said, as he handed the last of Kate's books into the railway carriage, 'now I have done something to make amends for my fault, I trust. One thing more I can do. When you get home you need not spare me. You can put it all on my shoulders, Miss Bonamy.'

'Thank you,' Kate answered demurely.

'You are going to do so, I see,' he said, laughing. 'I fear my character will reach Claversham before me.'

'I do not think we shall spread it very widely,' she answered in a peculiar tone, which he naturally misunderstood.

He had not time to weigh it, indeed, for the train was already in motion, and he shook hands with her as he walked beside it. 'Good-bye,' he said. And then he added in a lower tone—he was such a very young rector—'I hope to see very much of you in the future, Miss Bonamy.'

Kate sank back in her seat, her cheek a shade warmer. And in a moment he was alone upon the platform.

CHAPTER V.

'REGINALD LINDO, 1850.'

LONG before the later train, by which the rector came on, arrived at the Claversham station, the Rev. Stephen Clode was waiting on the platform. The curate—we have seen him once before—was a tall dark man, somewhat over thirty, with a strong rugged face and a bush of stiff black hair standing up from his forehead. He had been at Claversham three years, enjoying all the importance which old Mr. Williams's long illness would naturally give to his curate and *locum tenens*; and, though the town was agreed that his chagrin at having a new rector set over his head was great, it must be admitted that he concealed it with admirable skill. More than one letter had passed between him and the new incumbent, and, in securing for the latter Mr. Williams's good old-fashioned furniture, and in other ways, he had made himself very useful to Lindo. But the two had not met, and consequently the curate viewed the approaching train with lively, though secret, curiosity.

It came, the bell rang, the porter cried, 'Claversham! Claversham!' and the curate walked down it, past the carriage-windows, looking for the man he had come to meet. Half a dozen people stepped out, and for a moment there was a mimic tumult on the little platform; but nowhere amid it all could Clode see anyone like the new rector. 'He has missed another train!' he muttered to himself in contemptuous wonder; and he was already casting a last look round him before turning on his heel, when a tall fair

young man, in a clerical overcoat, who had been one of the first to alight, stepped up to him. 'Am I speaking to Mr. Clode?' said the stranger pleasantly. And he lifted his hat.

'Certainly,' the curate answered. 'I am Mr. Clode. But I fear I have not the——'

'No, I know,' replied the other, smiling, and at the same time holding out his hand. 'Though, indeed, I hoped that you might have been here on purpose to meet me. My name is Lindo.'

The curate uttered an exclamation of surprise; and, hastily returning the proffered grip, fixed his black eyes curiously on his new friend. 'Mr. Lindo did not mention that you were with him,' he answered in a tone of some embarrassment. 'But, there, let me see to your luggage. Is it all here?'

'Yes, I think so,' Lindo answered, tapping one article after another with his umbrella, and giving the station master a pleasant 'Good day!' 'Is there an omnibus or anything?'

'Yes,' Clode said; 'it will be all right. They know where to take it. You will walk up with me, perhaps. It is about a quarter of a mile to the rectory.'

The new-comer assented gladly, and the two passed out of the station together. Lindo let his eye travel up the wide steep street before him, until it rested on the noble tower which crowned the little hill and looked down now, as it had looked down for five centuries, on the red roofs clustering about it. His tower! His church! Even his companion did not remark, so slight was the action, that, as he passed out of the station and looked up, he lifted his hat for a second.

'And where is your father?' Clode asked. 'Was he delayed by business? Or perhaps,' he added, dubiously scanning him, 'you are Mr. Lindo's brother?'

'I *am* Mr. Lindo!' said our friend, turning in astonishment and looking at his companion.

'The rector?'

'Yes.'

It was the curate's turn to stare now, and he did so—his face flushing darkly and his eyes wide open for once. He even seemed for a moment to be stricken dumb with surprise and emotion. 'Indeed!' he said at last, in a half-stifled voice which he vainly strove to render natural. 'Indeed! I beg your pardon. I had thought—I don't know why—I mean that I had expected to see an older man.'

'I am sorry you are disappointed,' the rector replied, smiling ruefully. 'I am beginning to think I am rather young, for you are not the first to-day who has made that mistake.'

The curate did not answer, and the two walked on in silence, feeling somewhat awkward. Clode, indeed, was raging inwardly. By one thing and another he had been led to expect a man past middle life, and the only Clergy List in the parish, being three years old and containing the name of Lindo's uncle only, had confirmed him in the error. He had never conceived the idea that the man set over his head would be a fledgeling scarcely a year in priest's orders, or he would have gone elsewhere. He would never have stayed to be at the beck and call of such a puppy as this! He felt that he had been entrapped, and he chafed inwardly to such an extent that he did not dare to speak. To have this young fellow, six or seven years his junior, set over him would humiliate him in the eyes of all those before whom he had long played a different part!

In a minor degree Lindo also was vexed—not only because he was sufficiently sensitive to enter into the other's feelings, but also because he foresaw trouble ahead. It was annoying, too, to be received at each new *rencontre* as a surprise—as the reverse of all that had been expected and all that had been, as he feared, hoped.

'You will find the rectory a very comfortable house,' said the curate at last, his mind fully made up now that he would leave at the earliest possible date. 'Warm and old-fashioned. Rough-cast outside. Many of the rooms are panelled.'

'It looks out on the churchyard, I believe,' replied the rector, with the same laboured politeness.

'Yes, it stands high. The view from the windows at the back is pleasant. The front is perhaps a little gloomy—in winter at least.'

Near the top of the street a quaint, narrow flight of steps conducted them to the churchyard—an airy, elevated place, surrounded on three sides by the church and houses, but open on the fourth, on which a terraced walk, running along the summit of the old town wall, admitted the southern sun and afforded a wide view of plain and hill. The two men crossed the churchyard, the new rector looking about him with curiosity and a little awe, his companion marching straight onwards, his strongly marked face set ominously. He would go! He would go at the earliest possible minute, he was thinking.

It did not affect him nor alter his resolution that in the wooden

porch of the old rectory the new rector turned to him and shyly, yet with real feeling, besought his help and advice in the work before him. The young clergyman, commonly so self-confident, was moved, and moved deeply, by the evening light, by the dark forms of the yew trees, and his own strange and solemn position. Stephen Clode's answer was in the affirmative—it could hardly have been other; and it was spoken becomingly, if a little coldly, in view of the rector's advances. But, even while the curate spoke it, he was considering how he might best escape from Claversham. Still his Yea, yea, comforted his companion and lightened his momentary apprehensions.

Nor was the curate, when he had recovered from the first shock of surprise and disgust, so foolish as to betray his feelings by wanton churlishness. He parted from his companion at the door, leaving him to the welcome of Mrs. Baxter, the rector's London housekeeper, who had come down two days before; but at the same time he consented readily to return at half-past six and share his dinner, and give him in the course of the meal all the information in his power.

Left to himself, the rector went over the house under Mrs. Baxter's guidance, and, as he trod the polished floors, could not but feel some accession of self-importance. The panelled hall, with its wide oak staircase, fed this, and the spacious sombrely furnished library, with its books and busts, its antique clock and one good engraving, and its lofty windows opening upon the garden. So, in a less degree, did the long oak-panelled dining-room, and a smaller sitting-room which looked to the front and the churchyard; and the drawing-room, which was placed over the library, and seemed the larger because Mr. Williams had furnished it but scantily and lived in it less. Then there were six or seven bedrooms, and in the garden a stone basin and fountain. Altogether, when the rector descended after washing his hands, and stood on the library hearth-rug looking about him, he would have been more than human if he had not with a feeling of thankfulness entertained also some faint sense of self-gratulation and personal desert. Nor, probably, would Mr. Clode have been human if, coming in and finding the younger man standing on that hearthrug, and betraying in his face and attitude something of his thoughts, he on his part had not felt a degree of envy and antagonism. The man was so prosperous, so self-contented, so conscious of his own merit and success.

But the curate was too wise to betray this feeling, and, laying

himself out to be pleasant, he had, before the little meal was over, so far ingratiated himself with his entertainer that the rector was greatly surprised when he presently learned that Clode had not been to a university. 'You astonish me,' he said. 'You have so completely the manner of a 'varsity man!'

The observation was a little too gracious, a little wanting in tact, but it would not have hurt the curate had he not been at the moment in a state of irritation. As it was, Clode treasured it up, and never got rid of the feeling that the Oxford man looked down upon him because he had been only at Wells; whereas, in fact, Lindo, though sufficiently prone to judge his fellows, had far too high an opinion of himself to be bound by such distinctions, but was just as likely to make a friend of a ploughboy, if he liked him, as of a Christchurch man. After that speech, however, the curate was more than ever resolved to go, and go quickly.

But, when dinner was over and he was about to take his leave, he happened to pick up, as he moved about the room, a small Prayer Book which Lindo had just unpacked, and which was lying on the writing-table. Clode idly looked into it as he talked, and, seeing on the flyleaf 'Reginald Lindo, 1850,' took occasion, when he had done with the subject in hand, to discuss it. 'Surely,' he said, holding it up, 'you did not possess this in 1850, Mr. Lindo!'

'Hardly,' the rector answered, laughing. 'I was not born until '54.'

'Then who did?'

'It was my uncle's,' the rector explained. 'I was his godson, and his name was mine also.'

'Is he alive, may I ask?' the curate pursued, looking at the title-page as if he saw something curious there—though, indeed, what he saw was not new to him; only from it he had suddenly deduced a thought.

'No, he died about a year ago—nearly a year ago, I think,' Lindo answered carelessly, and without the least suspicion. 'He was always particularly kind to me, and I use that book a good deal. I must have it rebound.'

'Yes,' Clode said mechanically; 'it wants rebinding if you value it.'

'I shall have it done. And a lot of these books,' the rector continued, looking at old Mr. Williams's shelves, 'want their clothes renewing. I shall have them all looked to, I think.' He

had a pleasant sense that this was in his power. The cost of the furniture and library had made a hole in his private means, which were not very large; but that mattered little now. Eight hundred a year, paid quarterly, will bind a book or two.

Had the curate been attending, he would have read Lindo's thoughts with ease. But Clode was pursuing a train of reflections of his own, and so was spared this pang. 'Your uncle was an old man, I suppose,' he said. 'I think I observed in the Clergy List that he had been in orders about forty years.'

'Not quite so long as that,' Lindo replied. 'He was sixty-four when he died. He had been Lord Dynmore's private tutor, you know, though they were almost of an age.'

'Indeed!' the curate rejoined, still with that thoughtful look on his face. 'You knew Lord Dynmore through him, I suppose, then, Mr. Lindo?'

'Well, I got the living through him, if that is what you mean,' Lindo said frankly. 'But I do not think that I ever met Lord Dynmore. Certainly I should not know him from Adam.'

'Ah!' said the curate, 'ah! indeed!' He smiled as he gazed darkly into the fire, and stroked his chin. In the other's place, he thought, he would have been more reticent. He would not have disclaimed, though he might not have claimed, acquaintance with Lord Dynmore. He would have left the thing shadowy, to be defined by others as they pleased. Thinking thus, he got up somewhat abruptly, and wished Lindo good-night. A cool observer, indeed, might have noticed—but the rector did not—a change in his manner as he did so—a little accession of familiarity, which seemed not far removed from a delicate kind of contempt. The change was subtle, but one thing was certain. Stephen Clode had no longer any intention of leaving Claversham in a hurry. That resolve was gone.

Once out of the house, he walked as if he had business. He passed quickly from the churchyard by a narrow lane leading to an irregular open space quaintly called 'The Top of the Town.' Here were his own lodgings on the first-floor over a stationer's; but he did not enter them. Instead, he strode on towards the farther and darker side of the square, where were no buildings, but a belt of tall trees stood up, gaunt and rustling in the night wind, above a line of wall. Through the trees the lights of a large house were visible. He walked up the avenue which led to the door and, ringing loudly, was at once admitted.

The sound of his summons came pleasantly to the ears of two ladies who had been for some time placidly expecting it. They were seated in a small but charming room filled with soft shaded light and warmth and colour, an open piano and dainty pictures and china, and a well-littered writing-table all contributing to the air of accustomed luxury which pervaded it. The elder lady—that Mrs. Hammond whom we saw talking to the curate on the day of the old rector's funeral—looked up expectantly as Mr. Clode entered and, extending to him a podgy white hand covered with rings, began to chide him in a rich full voice for being so late. 'I have been dying,' she said cheerfully, 'to hear what is the fate before us, Mr. Clode. What is he like?'

'Well,' he answered, taking with a word of thanks the cup of tea which Laura offered him, 'I have one surprise in store for you. He is comparatively young.'

'Sixty?' said Mrs. Hammond interrogatively.

'Forty?' said Laura, raising her eyebrows.

'No,' Clode replied, smiling and stirring his tea, 'you must guess again. He is twenty-six.'

'Twenty-six! You are joking,' exclaimed the elder lady. While Laura opened her eyes very wide, but said nothing yet.

'No,' said the curate, 'I am not. He told me himself that he was not born until 1854.'

The two ladies were loud in their surprise then, while for a moment the curate sipped his tea in silence. The brass kettle hissed and bubbled on the hob. The tea-set twinkled cheerfully on the wicker table, and faint scents of flowers and fabrics filled the room with an atmosphere which he had long come to associate with Laura. It was Laura Hammond, indeed, who had introduced him to this new world. The son of an accountant living in a small Lincolnshire town, he owed his clerical profession to his mother's ardent wish that he should rise in the world. His father was not wealthy, and, before he came as curate to Claversham, Mr. Clode had had no experience of society. Then, alighting on a sudden in the midst of much such a small town as his native place, he found himself astonishingly transmogrified into a person of social importance. He found every door open to him, and among them the Hammonds', who were admitted to be the first people in the town. He fell in easily enough with the 'new learning,' but the central figure in the novel pleasant world of refinement continued throughout to be Laura Hammond.

Much petting had somewhat spoiled him, and it annoyed him now, as he sat sipping his tea, to observe that the ladies were far from displeased with his tidings. 'If he is a young man, he is sure not to be evangelical,' said Mrs. Hammond decisively. 'That is well. That is a comfort, at any rate.'

'He will play tennis, too, I dare say,' said Laura.

'And Mr. Bonamy will be kept in some order now,' Mrs. Hammond continued. 'Not that I am blaming you, Mr. Clode,' she added graciously—indeed, the curate was a favourite with her—'but in your position you could do nothing with a man so impracticable.'

'He really will be an acquisition,' cried Laura gleefully, her brown eyes shining in the firelight. And she made her tiny lace handkerchief into a ball and flung it up—and did not catch it, for, with all her talk of lawn-tennis, she was no great player. Her *rôle* lay rather in the drawing-room. She was as fond of comfort as a cat, and loved the fire with the love of a dog, and was, in a word, pre-eminently feminine, delighting to surround herself with all such things as tended to set off this side of her nature. 'But now,' she continued briskly, when the curate had recovered her handkerchief for her, 'tell me what you think of him. Is he nice?'

'Certainly, I should say so,' the curate answered, smiling.

But, though he smiled, he became silent again. He was reflecting with carefully hidden bitterness that Lindo would not only override him in the parish, but would be his rival in the particular inner clique which he affected—perhaps his rival with Laura. The thought awoke the worse nature of the man. Up to this time, though he had not been true, though he had kept back at Claversham details of his past history which a frank man would have avowed, though in the process of assimilating himself to his new surroundings he had been over-pliant, he had not been guilty of any baseness which had seemed to him a baseness, which had outraged his own conscience. But, as he reflected on the wrong which this young stranger was threatening to do him, he felt himself capable of much.

'Mrs. Hammond,' he said suddenly, 'may I ask if you have destroyed Lord Dynmore's letter which you showed me last week?'

'Destroyed Lord Dynmore's letter!' Laura answered, speaking for her mother in a tone of comic surprise. 'Do you think, sir, that we get peers' autographs every day of the week?'

'No,' Mrs. Hammond said, waving aside her daughter's flippancy and speaking with some stateliness. 'It is not destroyed, though such things are not so rare with us as Laura pretends. But why do you ask?'

'Because the rector was not sure when Lord Dynmore meant to return to England,' Clode explained readily. 'And I thought he mentioned the date in his letter to you, Mrs. Hammond.'

'I do not think so,' said Mrs. Hammond.

'Might I look?'

'Of course,' was the answer. 'Will you find it, Laura? I think it is under the malachite weight in the other room.'

It was, sitting there in solitary majesty. Laura opened it, and took the liberty of glancing through it first. Then she gave it to him. 'There, you unbelieving man,' she said, 'you can look. But he does not say a word about his return.'

The curate read rapidly until he came to one sentence, and on this his eye dwelt a moment. 'I hear with regret,' it ran, 'that poor Williams is not long for this world. When he goes I shall send you an old friend of mine. I trust he will become an old friend of yours also.' Clode barely glanced at the rest of the letter, but, as he handed it back, he informed himself that it was dated in America two days before Mr. Williams's death.

'No,' he admitted, 'I was wrong. I thought he said when he would return.'

'And you are satisfied now?' said Laura.

'Perfectly,' he answered. 'Perfectly!' with a little unnecessary emphasis.

He lingered long enough after this to give them a personal description of the new-comer—speaking always of him in words of praise—and then he took his leave. As his hand met Laura's, his face flushed ever so slightly and his dark eyes glowed; and the girl, as she turned away, smiled furtively, knowing well, though he had never spoken, that she was the cause of this. So she was, but in part only. At that moment the curate saw something besides Laura—he saw across a narrow strait of trouble the fair land of preferment, his footing on which once gained he might pretend to her and to many other pleasant things at present beyond his reach.

(To be continued.)

THE POST-OFFICE IN CHINA.

MANY writers decry the monopoly of the Post-office, others speak of it as a necessary evil, some defend it as an unmixed good; but, as a matter of fact, if not of principle, 'it is universally admitted in all lands that the conduct of the correspondence of the people is one of the proper functions of Government.'

However true this may be of other countries, it is most certainly not the case—nor ever has been the case—in the oldest of all countries, China. Collectors of postage stamps will produce their half-dozen specimens, labelled 'CHINA,' in protest against this doctrine. Are these not, they will ask, Chinese stamps—stamps issued by an Imperial Chinese Post-office? We are prepared sorrowfully to admit, they will say, that the existence of stamps does not necessarily imply the existence of a post-office. The beautiful set of 'Sedangs' placed on our market two years or so ago were not intended for use in that brilliant invention of 'King Marie I.,' the Kingdom of Deh Sedang: they were designed rather for the voracious but unwary collector. Still these 'China' stamps of ours have been used to frank letters in China; nay, the hieroglyphics upon them are said to read 'Post-office of the Ta Ch'ing State.' This, indeed, is true; but, for all that, the stamps are not entitled to rank as Imperial stamps of China. The Chinese Government, as everyone knows, looks with grave suspicion on change of any kind, and particularly on change advocated by the intruding foreigner. Still it has been, reluctantly enough, obliged to confess that, as regards mere material power (civilisation it would be loth to call it), the barbarian States of the West have, or seem to have, the advantage. The foreigners who, through miscellaneous motives, continue to press what they call schemes of reform upon China have urged upon her the adoption of various wealth-producing systems, as railways, mints, telegraphs, post-offices. The wealth China was very anxious indeed to secure: it meant power, and power meant the expulsion of the intruders and a relapse into dignified do-nothingness. But to make experiment of these new-fangled schemes on the old soil of China was distasteful in the extreme. Fortunately there was Formosa, hardly yet an integral part of the Empire,

and for that reason a capital place for experiments of this sort. To Formosa was carried the plant of the unlucky Wusung Railway, which foreigners had presumed to lay between Shanghai and Wusung, as what the Americans love to call 'an object lesson.' And in Formosa, some years later, was started the first official attempt at a post-office. The collectors of postage stamps will probably possess two large square labels inscribed 'FORMOSA—CHINA,' gay with galloping horses and squirming dragons. These were ordered some four years ago from a well-known English firm of engravers and duly shipped to Formosa. There a scheme was on foot for the conveyance of postal matter, private as well as official, by means of the Government couriers. Each stamp of twenty cash was to frank a letter or packet one stage—the distance that a hardy donkey could run without a meal. Unfortunately, the stamps, though most beautifully executed, did not commend themselves to the consignees. In their stead the first native attempt at a postage stamp appeared. It is simply a piece of the coarse thin Chinese paper an inch and a half broad by three inches long, labelled in Chinese thus: 'FORMOSA POSTAL STAMP' (or, in the earlier issue, 'FORMOSA MERCANTILE STAMP'). 'Weight —— ounces; Kuang-hsü —— year —— month —— day —— hour. Sent to ——.' The blanks are filled up by hand as thus: 'Weight ·3 ounce; 10 o'clock on the 13th of the 1st month of the 16th year of Kuang-hsü. Sent to Hobé.' There is a counterfoil, and on the space between is printed 'No. ——, postage ——.' A red seal is impressed on stamp and counterfoil; the stamp is cut from its foil and pasted on the envelope. The same red seal is again impressed, this time on stamp and envelope, and the letter is ready to start.

Observe that in the earlier issue these labels were inscribed 'Mercantile stamp,' for they were intended to frank private correspondence. I could not, when I was in Formosa a short time ago, discover that they had ever been used by private individuals at all: the only specimens I have met with came from the covers of official despatches. The reason was not hard to guess: the Chinese public do not consider the conveyance of their correspondence as part of the functions of Government. They have, indeed, a profound distrust of most or all Government functions, and would infinitely prefer to convey their correspondence themselves.

Before I endeavour to explain their usual method of managing

this, I may be allowed to dispose of the foreign-made FORMOSA and CHINA postage stamps. The history of the former is curious, and perhaps unique. They lay for some time in one of the brand-new yamêns—public offices—of the brand-new city of Taipeh ('Formosa North'), their existence almost forgotten. Meanwhile the other experiment of the energetic Governor—the railway—was being pushed forward as energetically as his very slow-going native subordinates would allow. At last a section was complete, and two little stations erected. Each had its ticket office and its booking clerk. (When I saw him of Taipeh, he was asleep in a long cane chair, while a crony sat nodding over a pipe.) The ticket offices were there, but the tickets had been forgotten. In this emergency the English Chief Engineer bethought him of the foreign postage stamps, which it was agreed on all hands were too good to be wasted. They were produced, surcharged 'Office of Trade' instead of 'Post-office,' and 'ten cents' in place of 'twenty cash.' Then they were sold to the would-be railway traveller at ten for the dollar. When the ticket collector came round, the passenger pulled out his sheet of stamps and detached one. All was, at that time, simplicity: there was but one class available to the ordinary public—the third class. You could only go to one station, and the fare to that was a postage stamp.

The CHINA adhesives have had a less chequered career. It is some fourteen years ago since the German Commissioner of Customs at Tientsin started what he trusted would prove the nucleus of a Chinese State Post-office. His couriers were to run daily to Peking, and twice a week or so to Chefoo Newchwang and Chinkiang. In other respects the service was to be assimilated to the ordinary European model, and of course there were postage stamps. The scheme has been extremely useful to foreigners in Peking at all seasons of the year, and to their countrymen at the northern ports when frozen in for the three winter months. But south of Chefoo it has never taken root, so excellently served are the residents by the numerous foreign post-offices. As for the Chinese themselves, outside of the Customs native staff it is doubtful if the service is even known to anybody, much less used by anybody. They say that, with pardonable misconception, the first postmen (who then wore uniforms) were arrested by the local magistrates as vagrants; nowadays they pass a quieter, if less gaudy, existence in *mufti*.

Perhaps the arrests, if such took place, were due to suspicion on the part of the authorities that the privileges of the State Courier Service were being infringed. For many centuries public despatches have been conveyed through China by means of a department of the Board of War. Post-roads, originally excellent but now disgraceful, radiate from Peking to all parts of the empire, and at distances regulated by the nature of the country are stations where a supply of horses is supposed to be kept—much as in Siberia—for the furthering of official correspondence. Despite the badness of the roads and the generally dilapidated condition of the ponies (they are hardly big enough to be called horses), surprising distances are, on urgent occasions, covered by this means. In theory the greatest speed is some 200 miles a day, and it is claimed that this is often actually attained. But in this, for China, rapid means of communication the general public is not permitted to share, any more than it may in England avail itself of the services of a Queen's Messenger.

It is not to be imagined that a veritable nation of shopkeepers like the Chinese would remain, owing to this refusal of their Government to convey their correspondence, destitute of a postal service. They have indeed a very complete system of their own, entirely independent of the State. In every town of any size may be seen ten or a dozen shops with the sign *Hsin Chü*, 'letter-office,' or postal establishment, suspended outside. Their business is to carry, not letters only, but small parcels, packets of silver, and the like, usually to other towns in the same province, but also on occasion to other provinces. They are in fact general carriers, or, perhaps it would be fairer to say, they occupy much the same position in China now as did the 'agents' at Harwich or Dover of the Postmaster-General at the beginning of the eighteenth century—so miscellaneous are the packages committed to their charge. They have no fixed tariff varying according to weight, and there appears to be no limit, within reason, to the size of letters or parcels they will carry. The charge for letters is fairly constant, but in estimating the cost of conveyance of parcels the size and shape alone seem to be taken into account. A rough calculation is then made, which the sender is at liberty—if he can—to abate. In fact, the transmission of parcels is regarded as being quite as much a matter of bargaining as the purchase of a pig. As there is no monopoly, each post-office tries to underbid its rivals, and competition sometimes verges on the

ludicrous. Since the institution of female post-office clerks in England, how many complaints (doubtless quite groundless) have there not been from would-be purchasers of stamps who have been kept waiting at the counter while the postmistress and her assistant compared notes on last Sunday's fashions? In China this deplorable state of things is reversed. There each post-office has its touts, who go round at very short intervals to each place of business to beg for the privilege of forwarding their letters. The bankers are the best customers, and as post-time draws near (post-time is fixed at the open ports by the departure of the local steamer) you will see a tout enter a bank and interrupt the clerks with an entreaty to be allowed to convey the letters they have not yet copied. He is dismissed for half an hour, and meanwhile two or three rivals will appear with the same request. The lucky man is he who happens to come in as the letters are sealed.

Prepayment is optional, no fine being levied on unpaid letters. Postage is known euphemistically as 'wine allowance,' and on the cover of the letter is always noted the amount paid, or due. Postage stamps have never, apparently, been thought of. Some day it will dawn upon one of these benighted firms how vast are the benefits of our stamp system. He will then hasten to supply himself with a varied and picturesque series, which he will dispose of to Western timbromaniacs at a highly satisfactory profit. Meanwhile his native customers, as a rule, do not prepay their postage, partly because a Chinaman hates to pay out money when he can possibly avoid it, and partly because he considers that his letter is far more likely to be carried safely and speedily to its destination if the carriers have an interest in its prompt delivery. The question is not, as was the case in England fifty or sixty years ago, in any way a sentimental one; no Chinaman is so unreasonable as to feel insulted at having nothing to pay on his letters. Custom only requires two classes of correspondence to be prepaid in full—letters to indigent relatives, and begging epistles.

But where valuables are conveyed the sender must declare them, and must pay a small premium of insurance. Premium or no premium, however, the post-office is responsible, and compensation for property lost in the mails can always be enforced by appeal to the district magistrate. Not only does the Chinese sender get in full what our own post-office has only grudgingly granted in part, but when he has to pay a premium it is exceed-

ingly small—often less than a farthing in the pound. It may be worth noticing that the Chinese have, for I am afraid to say how many years, employed postal notes for small remittances.

Every letter sent or received is entered in a book—that is to say, is practically registered. And for this registration you have no twopenny fee to pay, or any vexatious regulation to observe in the matter of your envelope. Furthermore, the post-office will give you credit. An account will be opened with you, which you need only settle once a month, or at longer intervals still if your credit be good.

So far, who shall say that our State monopoly is an advantage as compared with the freely competing private post-offices of China? But are these trustworthy? it will be asked. Foreign missionaries living in the interior declare that they are, and gladly make use of them. A Chinese firm of any standing is not less honest in its dealings than a similar firm in England, and it should be remembered that these post-offices pledge their credit. It is true that highways in China are not always safe—though they are safer than was Hounslow Heath last century. The argument would tell equally against a State post; but, as a matter of fact, it is of comparatively little consequence, for the post-offices arrange things so as to give everyone concerned, gentry of the road included, the least possible trouble: they pay a regular subsidy to the highwaymen.

The only advantage that a State post could offer would be a reduction in the rates between distant points in the empire; but even that would be gained by an increased cost in local delivery. Some day, no doubt, China will be prevailed on by her foreign advisers to assert her right to control the people's correspondence; but the day seems far distant. Perhaps, when it dawns, we in the West will have come round to the present views of the Chinese public on this point, and have decided that it is pleasanter to feel that we are conferring a favour by sending our letters through a grateful post-office than to have to worry a postmaster-general into doing badly what a private company could do better. Why should we not imitate the Chinese, and educate our postmasters into going round to beg for our letters? It would be far more agreeable than posting them ourselves, and there would be, literally, no call for boy messengers.

A FORGOTTEN RACE.

'I SWEAR to make everyone happy,' was the royal oath taken by the King of the Guanches on ascending the throne—the King of that strange and forgotten people who, in the midst of the Atlantic, in the sunny climes of the Fortunate Islands, remained untouched by civilisation, and who lived in the happy innocence and careless joyousness of the stone age into the fifteenth century.

The secret how to secure the happiness of a whole people died with the Guanches; but now that the Happy Islands are being visited by those whom care or disease have robbed of health, the records, the customs and the character of the ancient race who once peopled these islands are becoming daily of more general interest.

The tradition runs that nine, ten, perhaps even twelve thousand years ago, a great continent stretched where now rolls the Atlantic Ocean. This was the fabled country of Atlantis described by Plato, the cradle of the race of the Atlantides who civilised the ancient world. It is alleged that this vast continent was overwhelmed and destroyed by a cataclysm combined with a volcanic outburst, after which nothing remained but a few isolated mountain peaks above the ruin of the waters: these mountain heights are to-day the islands of the Canaries, Madeira, the Azores and Cape Verd, all of which rise precipitously and in an isolated manner from the ocean. The same cataclysm covered the Libyan plain with sea, which on retiring left the desert of Sahara. The memory of a terrible catastrophe which overwhelmed a whole continent is still preserved in the fables and traditions of all European nations.

The Guanches, the inhabitants of the Canary Islands, are said to have been the remnants of the ancient race who 10,000 years ago peopled the drowned continent of Atlantis. In support of this view it is contended that the inhabitants of the seven Canary Islands had no intercommunication by means of boats, for they, like all ancient people, had a great dread of the sea; yet, though thus isolated, they all spoke dialects of the same language and had the same customs and religion. Their language resembled that spoken by the Berbers of the Atlas range of mountains, and

it is hence argued that the Canary Islands were an extension of this range and were at one time continuous with it.

In the fifteenth century these isolated and forgotten remnants of a lost continent were rediscovered. The people were still living in a stone age, and had no implements but hatchets made of hard obsidian, and weapons which consisted of stones thrown from slings, of darts made of wood with the points hardened in the fire, and of shields of the wood of the dragon-tree; but so accurate was their aim with these darts and slings, and so indomitable was their courage, that Europeans with the advantages of ships and firearms, and the resources of civilisation, spent nearly 100 years in effecting the conquest of the islands.

Their government, as the records of their Spanish conquerors attest, was a kind of aristocratic communism. Each island was ruled over by kings or menceys. When a king ascended the throne he kissed the sacred bone, the insignia of royalty, and said, as already stated, 'I swear to make everyone happy.' Truly these were the Happy Isles where the aim of the king was not power and conquest, but the happiness of all. The mencey was then crowned with flowers, and a banquet followed. Next in rank to the king were the nobles, who were strictly limited in number. Noble rank was hereditary, but a son, on claiming to inherit his father's title, had to give proof of a blameless life, otherwise he was disinherited by popular acclamation. A nobleman could also be disinherited and degraded for base deeds, and nobility was granted for great and courageous acts. The king's vassals reigned over districts, and beneath them were the wealthy classes and the people. Though communists in a sense, the Guanches recognised inequality in man and explained it thus. In the beginning of the world, they said, God created a certain number of men and women, and gave them the possession of everything upon the earth. Afterwards He created more men and women to whom He gave nothing. These demanded their share, but God said, 'Serve the others, and they will give to you.' Thus originated in a Divine ordinance masters and servants, nobles and people; but the Guanches recognised the fact that with privileges came responsibilities; thus the nobles served the State by administering justice, commanding in war, and advising in council.

The mencey was considered to be the owner of the soil, the fruits of which he gave to his people. The land was divided among the families according to their size and requirements, and

at the death of the head of the family the estates reverted to the sovereign and were again apportioned. The land being the only source of wealth, it was by these means made impossible for the powerful to become rich at the expense of the poor. We are also told that a man's wealth was estimated by his generosity to the needy. Life in those days and in these Happy Isles was idyllic; the generous earth produced abundance for all, the genial climate banished care, and a gentle and valiant race of shepherds lived innocent and happy lives 'under the shade of enormous laurels, weaving baskets, playing the flute, singing of the loves and wars of their ancestors, and dancing; it was the pastoral life of the earliest ages of the world.'

In religion the Guanches were pure theists, and they worshipped the God of heaven and earth. Their religious rites are hidden in mystery, but they seem to have had temples, vestal virgins, and priests. The latter were vowed to poverty, and were selected from among the nobility. Tithes were paid to the priests of the produce of the land, and this accumulated wealth was either divided among the poor or reserved for times of scarcity. Their temples consisted of two circular walls, one within the other; the first circle represented the earth, the ditch between the two walls the sea, and the outer circle the heavens. The ceremony of worship seems to have been very simple, and to have consisted in pouring sheep's milk from the sacred urn on to mother earth, and in the uttering of prayers with lamentations and tears by the people kneeling.

The Guanches believed in immortality and in rewards and punishments after death. Their morality was pure and their precepts few. 'Avoid those whom vice renders contemptible, otherwise you will be an offence to your fellows.' 'Associate with the good, help and succour everyone.' 'Be good if you wish to be beloved.' 'Value the friendship and esteem of the good only.' 'Never tell lies.' 'Despise the wicked, love the good.' 'Be an honour to your country through your courage and virtue.' These were some of the maxims of the Guanches, and they believed in them and acted up to them, and their chiefs were those who were declared to be the bravest, the noblest, and the most virtuous. Happy people! whose lives were a pastoral idyll during the dark ages of Europe.

The Guanches were troglodytes and lived in caves, though from some accounts it seems that they also inhabited houses,

particularly in the winter. In a country in which the soil is dry and the sunshine brilliant, cave-dwelling is not a hardship but a luxury. The Guanche cave cities exist to this day, and in Grand Canary I found them still inhabited. They were made by removing the soft tufa from the more solid basalt, and large, cool, shady rooms were thus obtained. The Guanches were very nice and particular as to the internal arrangements of their houses, and the sleeping rooms were separate from the living rooms. They dressed in skins ingeniously sewn together by means of needles made out of fish-bones, and thread made of leather cut into extremely fine strips. They also wore skirts made of palm-leaves and rushes cleverly plaited so as to have almost the appearance of a woven material; caps of fur or skin, and boots or moccasins of leather, completed the costume. The skirts of the women were longer than those of the men; those of the vestal virgins were white, and they also wore an amber girdle and necklace. The men wore their beards pointed, and the women dyed their hair and painted their faces by means of little wooden dies or pastidera,[1] cut into elaborate patterns. Their food was chiefly gofio—that is, roasted maize, ground and mixed with water or milk—as well as cheese, fish, and fresh meat; they drank nothing but water and milk: fermented liquors were unknown among them. A primitive kind of earth-oven seems to have been known to them, and their stone hand-mills for grinding maize are used by the Canarians to this day. In some of the islands the root of a fern was used for bread instead of maize. They made butter by putting the milk into a wooden vessel and suspending it from the branch of a tree; two women, standing a few paces apart, swung the vessel from one to the other till the butter came.

The Guanches are reported to have been strong and handsome, and of extraordinary agility of movement, of remarkable courage, and of a loyal disposition; but they showed the credulity of children and the simple directness of shepherds. So tall were they that the Spaniards speak of them as giants, and their strength and endurance were so great that they were conquered by stratagem but not by force. They ran as fast as horses, and could leap over a pole held between two men five or six feet high; they could climb the highest mountains and jump the deepest ravines. Their endurance as swimmers was so great that they were

[1] These pastidera, many of which I examined in the museums of Santa Cruz and Las Palmas, are said by Berthelot to be the seals of princes.

accustomed to swim across the nine miles strait between Lancerote and Graciosa; having no boats, their method of fishing was to strike the fish with sticks, or catch them in their hands, while swimming. Their skulls which are preserved in the museums of the island, and of which I took photographs, show marked cerebral development, the frontal and parietal bones being well developed and the facial angle good. In the early days of the conquest, before rapine and murder had done their vile work, the Guanches are spoken of as being musical and fond of dancing and singing. These arts, together with those of basket-weaving and pottery-making, were a few relics of a great and remote civilisation, and were preserved in the same way (as Pigot-Ogier suggests) as, if Europe were submerged, the shepherds of the Tyrol, the Alps, and the Pyrenees would preserve the national airs and village dances of their respective countries. The Guanches were, it is supposed, but the mountain shepherds of a submerged world. Though so strong physically, the Guanches were nevertheless a very gentle race: they rarely made war on one another, and when the Europeans fell into their hands they did not kill them, but sent them to tend sheep on the mountains. So tame were the birds in this happy land that when the Spaniards first landed they came and fed out of their hands. To kill an animal degraded a man; the butcher was a reprieved criminal and an outcast, and lived apart, he and his assistants being supported by the State. No woman was allowed to approach the shambles, and in such horror was killing held by these gentle giants that no man could be ennobled until he had publicly declared that he had not been guilty of killing any animal, not even a goat. Their standard of morality was high; they were monogamists, and adultery was punished by imprisonment and death; robbery was almost unknown among them, and drunkenness not yet invented. The Guanches were bound by law to treat women with the greatest respect, and a man was obliged to make way for every woman he met walking, to bear her burdens, and deferentially to escort her home, should she wish it. If a Guanche were ennobled for any great deed, the people were assembled on the occasion, and among the questions asked, to which a negative answer must be given before the patent of nobility was granted, was: 'Has he ever been disrespectful to women?' The women are not celebrated as having been beautiful, but they were almost as agile and strong as the men. Even in war the women and children were protected, and pillage was forbidden.

Situated at the farthest western extremity of the known world, the ancients regarded the Canary Islands as the limits of the earth, and from their natural and abundant beauty they obtained the name of the Elysian Fields. Ezekiel mentions the fact that the Tyrians traded with the Isles of Elishah (Elysian Fields), and the Carthaginians went thither for the purple of the murex and the red dye of the cochineal. Homer says that 'Jupiter will send Menelaus to those Elysian Fields which are at the end of the world, where the sharpness of winter is not felt, where the air is always pure and freshened by the ocean breezes.' Hesiod is still more definite, and says, 'Jupiter sent the dead heroes to the end of the world, to the Fortunate Islands which are in the middle of the ocean.' Herodotus thus describes Teneriffe: 'The world ends where the sea is no longer navigable, in that place where are the gardens of the Hesperides, where Atlas supports the sky on a mountain as conical as a cylinder.' Later we have a more historical description of the Canary Islands, for Juba, King of Mauritania, sent a fleet thither, and wrote a history of the voyage, which he sent to the Emperor Augustus. Pliny gives extracts from this work, and his description of the natural history of the islands is perfectly accurate. In 150 A.D. Ptolemy placed the first terrestrial meridian at Hierro, the most western of the Canary Islands.

From this time till the twelfth century, the islands are lost in the gloom of the dark ages. They seem to have been known to the Moors and Arabs, the depositors of learning and science, and were called by them 'Gezagrel Khalidal'—the Happy Islands. In 1291 the Genoese sent an expedition to the islands, but it never returned. In 1330 we learn that the islands were accidentally discovered by the captain of a French ship running before the wind, who took refuge in one of the ports. On returning to Portugal, the captain reported the circumstances, on which King Alfonso IV. sent an expedition under Don Luis de Ordo with orders to conquer the islands, but he was repulsed by the inhabitants of Gomera. In 1334 another expedition was sent by the King of Portugal, and a landing was effected at Gomera, but history is silent as to the result. In 1341 three caravels were fitted out by Alfonso IV. and despatched from Lisbon. The adventurers landed at Lancerote, Fuerteventura, Gran Canaria, Hierro, and Gomera; but, alarmed by the eruption from the Peak of Teneriffe, they abandoned their intention, and returned to Lisbon with some of the Guanches or natives as captives. The following year another

expedition was undertaken by Luis de la Cerda, grandson of Alfonso X., King of Castile, and on his return he received from the Pope Clement VI., at Avignon, the title of 'King of the Islands to be conquered in order to extend the fame of the Church to the ends of the world.' But war having been declared by England, Don Luis was obliged to give up the idea of this conquest.

From this time forward Andalusians engaged in the slave trade seem to have touched at the Canary Islands from time to time. About the year 1400 the Spaniards appealed to the Normans to help them conquer the islands, and five vessels, manned by Normans, Biscayans, and Andalusians, set sail under Gonzola Perazza Martel. The Peak of El Teyde being in eruption, they avoided Teneriffe, and went to Lancerote, which they pillaged, and made the king and queen and 170 natives prisoners, whom they brought back to Spain and sold as slaves. The success of this expedition made a great impression on the Normans, and led to the only happy event in the long and painful history of the conquest of the Canary Islands—namely, the expedition of Béthencourt.

The story of Béthencourt and his fatherly rule over the Canary Islands reads like a tale of the 'good old times,' the golden age of kindly deeds, noble thoughts, and kingly bearing; and were it not that his reign was so short-lived, and was followed by the old-world ways of cruelty, carnage, and superstition, we should, if it stood alone, be almost tempted to believe, as the poets tell, that the past was better than the present.

Béthencourt was a Norman knight, and, though over sixty years of age, full of enterprise and enthusiasm, and longing for opportunities to do great deeds. Stories had reached Normandy of the wonderful and long-forgotten islands in mid-ocean, inhabited by a strange and gentle people, who had been plundered and carried as slaves to Europe by various Spanish corsairs. These stories reached the ears of Béthencourt and one Gadier de la Sala, who sold their lands to raise funds to fit out an expedition to go in search of the Fortunate Islands. They set sail on May 1, 1400, and succeeded in reaching an island which they named Lancerote. The natives fled to the mountains, but Béthencourt's aim was, if possible, to achieve a bloodless conquest, and his policy was that of gentleness and justice. Finding they were unmolested, the natives came down from their hiding-places and assisted the invaders to build a fort at Rubicon. Béthencourt reigned over Lancerote for three years, but being anxious to conquer the other

islands, he returned to Spain, and obtained from Henry III., who claimed them as his property, a grant of the Fortunate Islands under the title of King. But while Béthencourt was away on this errand, matters went badly in Lancerote. He had left his relative, William de Béthencourt, as regent, but he behaved with such licentiousness and cruelty to the natives that they rose up and killed him, and imprisoned the rest of the Normans in the fort at Rubicon, where they were on the point of dying from famine when Béthencourt arrived from Spain with a newly equipped fleet. The simple natives, headed by their king, laid their complaints against the viceregal foreign government before Béthencourt, who, finding that his own countrymen had been in the wrong, pardoned the Lancerote king, and restored to the natives all the property of which they had been plundered; upon which they laid down their arms, the beleaguered garrison was relieved, and peace was restored. Shortly afterwards the Lancerote king, with all his followers, was baptised.

With his little kingdom of Lancerote now at peace and in good order, Béthencourt thought the time had arrived for conquering Fuerteventura, distant only six miles. He gathered all his forces together, and set sail in June 1405. There were at the time two kings in Fuerteventura who chanced to be at war with one another over questions of pasture, and hence they were unable to combine against the invaders. Their power was, however, as nothing compared with that of two women who were greatly revered for their wisdom, and who had determined that the natives should not resist the foreigners, but should receive them kindly. These women exercised so great an influence over the kings that they laid down their arms and consented to be baptised, and their example was followed by all the islanders. Thus Béthencourt became Lord of Fuerteventura without striking a blow.

Gomera was the next island to submit. Having landed his forces, Béthencourt cautiously proceeded inland, fearing an ambuscade, but presently he saw with surprise a great concourse of people coming towards him armed with swords, darts, lances, and crossbows (implements of war quite unknown among the Guanches), but who showed at the same time every appearance of joy. To his surprise, the leaders accosted him in Spanish and bade him welcome; and the story runs that this kindly reception was due to the fact that about thirty years previously some buccaneering Spaniards had landed at Gomera and given battle to the natives,

but were defeated and driven into a defile from which egress was impossible except by throwing themselves over the steep cliffs. In this terrible emergency the Spanish captain appealed to the compassion of the King of the Gomerans, and with such success that the king released the Spaniards, treated them with the greatest hospitality, and conducted them in safety to their ships lying in harbour. In gratitude the Spanish captain not only gave the king presents of swords and shields, but left with him a Spanish priest to convert the Gomerans to the true faith. This man by his gentle conduct gained the affection of the simple people, and left behind him on his death the tradition that the Spaniards were a kindly, courteous, and brave people, to be welcomed with joy should they ever come back. Thus in Gomera the two races began to live together in peace and unity.

In the island of Hierro there had lived many years before a wise man called Yore, who on his death-bed had called the natives together and had prophesied that when his flesh was consumed and his bones mouldered into dust, white houses would be seen coming across the sea, and that when the islanders saw them they were not to fear, for they would contain their god, Eroaranzan, who would come to bring them joy and prosperity. When Béthencourt, having determined to annex Hierro, approached the island with his fleet of white-sailed ships, the natives ran to the tomb of Yore, and finding that his bones were but dust, they said, 'It is Eroaranzan,' and they hastened to the shore to give him welcome. Béthencourt was delighted at such a bloodless conquest, so after staying a few days he returned to Fuerteventura, and left as his representative Lazara, with strict injunctions to treat the Hierrons with kindness and justice. Now, of all the honoured customs of the Guanches none is more worthy of profound respect than their reverence for women. Lazara used his power to outrage all their sentiments and to behave with unblushing immorality. The villages rose in revolt, and Lazara was stabbed and killed. On hearing of this, Béthencourt sent another governor with instructions to inquire into the causes of the rebellion. On finding that it was due entirely to the immoralities of Lazara and his troops, he beheaded two of the officers and hanged three soldiers, and thus quelled the disturbance; but, what was more important, he gave the natives the assurance that Béthencourt dealt out justice with an even hand.

The three large islands still, however, remained unconquered,

and what satisfaction was it to Béthencourt to be styled 'King of the Canary Islands,' when the Peak of Teneriffe and the mountain fastnesses of Gran Canaria resisted his sway? Previous to the conquest of Gomera he had made an unsuccessful attempt to obtain a footing in Canaria, but the natives met his handful of men in such numbers, and used their primitive weapons of stones and darts with such skill and strength, that he was obliged to retire. He had no better luck when he made a second attempt in 1406. Chagrined beyond measure at this want of success, and at the pertinacious resistance of the Canarians, he determined once more to personally appeal for assistance to the King of Castile. He made all arrangements for a prolonged absence from his beloved little kingdom. He sent for the native chiefs and the European governors of the four conquered islands, and told them of his plans; how he hoped to return with ships and men to effect the conquest of Teneriffe, Canaria, and Palma; he begged them to live in peace together, and he promised to go and see the Pope, and induce him to send a bishop to the islands. Before leaving he appointed his nephew, Mason de Béthencourt, governor-general in his absence. Great was the grief of the islanders at parting with their father-king, and when his ship sailed away, it was followed for miles by the faithful Guanches, who swam after it to give Béthencourt last words of affectionate parting. Béthencourt fulfilled his intention so far as to see the king and obtain the promise of his support, and he went to Avignon and saw the Pope Benedict XIII., who appointed a bishop to the Canary Islands; but on proceeding to Normandy to visit his relations, he fell sick, and died in 1408 at the age of seventy years. With Béthencourt's life ended the last happy days of the Guanches. Of Béthencourt, M. Pigot-Ogier says, 'It would be hard to find a character in history more honourable and more kindly than that of Béthencourt. He exercised his authority with parental kindness, which in no degree weakened his power. He was courageous, benevolent, and in all things worthy of his great enterprise. His chief characteristic was his love of justice, and he is remembered not so much for having conquered a kingdom, as for having governed it justly in times when might was right.'

The conquest of Gran Canaria was effected by other hands than those of Béthencourt, and by means other than those he would have employed.

As one sails away from Teneriffe, and her snowy peak is seen to rise columnar through the clouds, the grey fastnesses of Gran

Canaria come in sight. Wall behind wall they rise, straight-topped and rectangular, silver-grey in the shimmering sunlight which dances on the turquoise sea at their feet, and on the purple sails of the tiny Portuguese men-of-war which float lazily by, heedless, as they did in the days of the Guanches, of heroic struggles and historic deeds. Canaria was the ancient name of the island, and was called thus by Pliny, who tried to find a reason for the title, but the prefix 'Gran' was added by Béthencourt, the unwilling tribute of a defeated captain to the character and courage of the inhabitants.

The Canarians were the most civilised, the most disciplined, and the bravest of all the inhabitants of the Fortunate Islands, and their conquest, aided by the appliances of civilisation, and the duplicity and stratagem of civilised soldiers, took seventy-eight years to accomplish. Béthencourt, fired with the ambition to be king of all the seven islands before he died, made, as already stated, two excursions to Gran Canaria, but was repulsed with slaughter, and unable to obtain a footing. For sixty years the Canarians were left in peace, but in 1461 Diego de Herrara determined to attempt the conquest of Gran Canaria, and at first obtained from the natives consent to land; but subsequently, on their understanding that conquest and not commerce was intended, they refused to allow Diego to disembark his troops. The sole weapons of the Canarians were, at the beginning of the unequal contest, stones thrown from slings with great precision and force, and sticks with points hardened in the fire, which could be thrown with sufficient directness and strength to pierce the Spanish targets and the closest coats of mail; subsequently they took European arms in battle and learnt the use of them; but their chief defence was their indomitable courage and the inaccessible character of their mountain fastnesses. Nothing daunted by failure, Diego gathered together a large force of Spaniards and Portuguese, and again set sail for the conquest of Gran Canaria. At that time, it is said, the fighting men of the island numbered 14,000, and an old prophecy gave tenacity to their determination to defend to the utmost their country from the invaders. The Spanish commander landed his troops at the port of Gando, but the natives, who had been constantly on the look-out from the battlemented heights of the island, descended and drove them with slaughter to the shore. In this extremity Diego sent a detachment of his troops to the other side of the island in order to make a diversion and divide the forces of the natives. They

landed safely, and proceeded to ascend inland without meeting the enemy; it was not till they had reached the top of the pass that they discerned that their movements had been quietly watched, and that retreat was cut off. They marched on, hoping to be able to descend on the other side of the mountain, but presently they found that the path led to an open place surrounded by a high stone wall, a kind of fortress which was used by the Canarians for security in time of war. With a shout of victory the natives surrounded and held the Spanish fast prisoners, and thus they were kept for two days without meat or drink. Death was inevitable, and the slaughter of the Spaniards had been decided upon, when deliverance came in the person of a woman called Maria Lafeiga, a niece of the Prince or Guanarteme of Galdar. This young woman had been a prisoner at Lancerote, and had learnt to speak Castilian. She remembered having seen the Spanish captain at Lancerote, and was moved with compassion at his impending fate. She urged the Spaniards to give themselves up unreservedly to her uncle, and to trust to his generosity. The Guanarteme was on his part not loth to do a magnanimous act. Maria became the mediator, and the result was that Diego de Sylva, the Spanish captain, and his followers gave up their arms and left the fortress. The Guanarteme and the Gayrer, or chiefs, showed the Spaniards every kindness and hospitality, after which they undertook to conduct them to their ships. On their way they came to a very high precipitous cliff, where the path of descent was so narrow that only one person could pass at a time. The Spaniards, unused to treat others and to be treated with the simple generosity of the Canarians, concluded that they had been betrayed and had been led here to die, upon which they warmly upbraided the Canarians for their breach of faith. Indignation was rife at this false accusation, but, saying nothing in reply, the Guanarteme stepped forward to Diego de Sylva, and said, 'Take hold of the skirt of my garment, and I will lead you down,' and thus each Canarian led a Spaniard safely to the bottom of the cliffs, and to their ships. On parting the Guanches had but one complaint to make, and that was that they should have been thought capable of telling a lie or breaking faith.

De Sylva's gratitude was fervid but short-lived, for though he sent a scarlet cloak and a sword and musket to the Guanarteme, he returned shortly with fresh troops and defeated the Canarians in a pitched battle with great slaughter. Still, however, the island remained unconquered. The aid of the Church and of falsehood

was next called into requisition. The Bishop Don Diego Lopez de Yllescas was summoned to select a site for a chapel, and the Canarians were humbly asked to give permission for a chapel to be built on the seashore, in which, as the Spaniards said, they might worship their God after their own fashion. The simple Guanches, scorning a lie themselves and hence not suspecting it in others, gladly gave consent, and even helped in its construction; but, when completed, they discovered to their cost that the chapel was a fort, and that the god the Spaniards worshipped was the god of battles. Delighted at the success of their stratagem, the Spanish commander and the bishop sailed away and left a strong garrison for the first time on Canarian soil. The natives watched their opportunity, and having cleverly one day decoyed the garrison out, they slew some of them and took others prisoners, and razed the fort to the ground. A great expedition from Spain was then fitted out and sent against the recalcitrant islanders, who were defeated in a pitched battle after the most determined resistance. Courage is not proof against the deadly bullet, and the Spaniards were beginning to use firearms.

The happy, the innocent days of the Canarians were now gone for ever: no more did they rejoice in feats of strength and agility, no more did they dance and sing, and sit tranquil under a safe and honoured government; discord had succeeded to peace, famine and pestilence to plenty, and pomp and religious duplicity to the simple worship of God and goodness. The Spanish conquerors built themselves a city at Las Palmas, on the level lands of the shore, where they quarrelled among themselves and made raids for cattle to the mountains, to which the natives had retired. For twenty years the war was carried on, but one by one the Canarians were driven out of their mountain fastnesses.

Many are the stories told of courage and magnanimity among the Canarians and of daring among the Spaniards in this dying struggle of a brave and noble race. The last stand was made in 1483. All the fighting men of the Guanches, now numbering only 600, about 1,000 women, and the remaining nobles, were collected at a fortified place called Ausite, and were under the command of the youthful Guanarteme of Telde. The old chief or Guanarteme of Galdar had in a previous battle been taken prisoner and sent to Spain, where he had been graciously received by the king and queen. The splendour and power of Spain, and the pomp of the Romish Church, made so profound an impression

on his mind, that he was baptised and returned to Gran Canaria determined to preach to his countrymen the futility of further resistance. He mounted to the fortress which contained all the shrunken strength of Gran Canaria, the remnant of the army of 14,000 fighting men after seventy-eight years' struggle with sticks and stones against the arms, the ships, and the resources of Europe. He was received with respect, silence, and tears. He urged his point, and he gained it. The Canarians laid down their arms and surrendered. Not so, however, the young Guanarteme of Telde, who was betrothed to the daughter of the chief of Galdar. Going to the edge of the precipice with the old faycar, or high priest, they embraced each other, and, calling upon their God, 'Atirtisma! Atirtisma!' they perished together by leaping into the abyss. Shortly afterwards the disconsolate bride was baptised and married to a Spanish grandee, Don Ferdinando de Guzman, and thus was consummated the conquest of Gran Canaria.

The Peak of El Teyde, constantly vomiting forth flames and lava, long protected Teneriffe from invasion; but the story of a marvellous and miracle-working image of the Virgin secreted in Teneriffe induced the Spaniards to make a descent on the island with a view to rescue this holy relic from the hands of barbarians. The story of this wonderful image is curious. One day towards the end of the fourteenth century, two Guanche shepherds were driving their flocks down a barrancho, when they noticed that at a certain spot their flocks turned back and showed signs of fear. Unable to compel the sheep to proceed, one of the shepherds went forward to ascertain the cause of alarm, and saw what appeared to him to be a woman dressed in strange and beautiful garments standing in front of a cave. He made signs to her to get out of the way, for it was against the custom of the Guanches for a man to speak to a woman if he met her in a lonely place. As she did not move, he became angry at what he considered the immodest behaviour of the woman, and took up a stone to throw at her, when his arm became immovable in the position of throwing, and was in great pain. The other shepherd, seeing what had happened, went up to the supposed woman, and found her to be an image, the hand of which he tried to cut off with a sharp stone; but, instead of succeeding, he wounded his own hand severely. Much alarmed, the shepherds repaired without delay to the king, and told him what had happened. He assembled his council, and with them and a great concourse of people he went to the spot

where the shepherds declared they would see the image, and they found it standing as before at the mouth of the cave. No one, however, durst touch it, but the king commanded the two shepherds to take it up reverently, and immediately they did so they were cured. At this the king declared that the image was divine and that no one should carry it but himself, and he took it up and set it in a cave, where it remained and became an object of adoration. A hundred years later Diego de Herrara became anxious to possess this sacred image, and, landing from Lancerote with a party of Guanches who knew where the image was, he secretly conveyed it away and placed it in the cathedral at Rubicon.

But the Virgin was faithful to her Guanches of Teneriffe, and to the dismay of Diego de Herrara and his wife, Donna Innes Peraza, the image was found every morning with its face turned to the wall, though it was daily replaced. They decided at last to restore it to Teneriffe, and with this purpose set sail with a fleet of vessels and anchored in a port of Teneriffe. Diego was met by the King of Guiamar with an armed force, but when he found that Diego had only come to return the sacred image he loaded him with gifts and gave him free permission to send vessels to trade with Teneriffe. Acting on this treaty of commerce, Sancho Herrara, the son of Diego, was allowed to land and build a fort at what is now known as Santa Cruz. Disputes presently arose between the two peoples, but it was agreed that when such occurred the delinquent should be delivered to the offended party to be punished as thought fit. On a complaint of sheep-stealing being made against some Spaniards they were delivered to the Guanches, who, after reprimanding them, sent them back to their own people; soon afterwards a complaint of injury was made against the Guanches, who were accordingly given over to the mercy of Sancho Herrara; but he, forgetting the example of clemency shown him by the Guanches, had all the accused hanged. The Guanches were so enraged at this want of generosity that they rose up and drove the Spaniards out of the island, and razed the fort to the ground.

In 1493 Alonzo de Lugo arrived at Teneriffe with a fleet of ships and 1,000 armed men, determined to effect the conquest of the island. There were five kings of Teneriffe, and of these four at once submitted and made terms with the invader. The statues of these traitor kings adorn the market-place of Santa Cruz to

this day. But the King of Taora refused to submit; he rallied his fighting men to the number of 300, and demanded of Alonzo what he wanted; to which the Spanish captain replied that he came only to court his friendship, to convert him to Christianity, and to make him a vassal of the King of Spain. To this the King of Taora replied that he despised no man's friendship, that he knew nothing of Christianity, and that as to becoming a vassal of the King of Spain, he was born free and he would die free. Alonzo continued to press forward with his troops, and penetrated into the island as far as Oratavo, where he looted the country and was returning with his booty when, in crossing a deep defile or barrancho, the King of Taora fell upon him with 300 Guanches and put him to rout, massacring 700 of his troops. The place is called now Mantanza de Centejo (the slaughter of Centejo) in memory of this battle. Broken and discouraged, Alonzo set sail from Teneriffe, and landed in Gran Canaria, whence he sent to Spain for funds and men. In a short time he returned to Teneriffe with an army of 1,000 foot and 70 horse. He landed at Santa Cruz and marched to Laguna. At Taora he met the armed and united forces of the Guanches, with whom he had several fights. The Guanches were, however, so deeply impressed with the order, fighting qualities, and seemingly endless resources of the Spaniards, that they concluded that it was useless to contend with them, and, assembling all the chief men of the island, they demanded a conference with Alonzo. They asked him what had induced the Spaniards to invade the island, to plunder the Guanches of their cattle, and to carry the people into captivity? To which Alonzo replied that his sole motive was his desire to convert them to Christianity. After due consideration the Guanches decided to accede to Alonzo's wish and to become Christians, and within a few days the whole of the inhabitants of Teneriffe were baptised. So rejoiced was Alonzo at this peaceable termination of the war that he founded a hermitage on the spot, and called it Nuestra Señora de la Victoria.

Umbrageous Palma had long been a coveted possession by the Spaniards, but excepting numerous marauding expeditions in search of slaves, its conquest was not seriously attempted until Alonzo de Lugo took it in hand in 1490. Having borne his part in the conquest of Gran Canaria, Alonzo grew tired of inactivity, and returned to Spain to obtain funds for a fresh adventure, and

received from the king a grant of the conquest of Palma and Teneriffe. He landed at Tassacorta in Palma, and marched inland. The only difficulty met with was at the Caldera, a vast extinct crater with its rugged sides clothed with forest trees and seamed by streams. Here the king and his followers made a final stand against the invaders, who were unable to dislodge them. The next morning Alonzo proposed a conference and promised the king that if he and his followers would submit to the King of Spain, their liberties and properties would be respected and preserved to them. To this the king replied that if Alonzo would return to the foot of the mountain he would come next day and make his submission. But treachery was found a quicker remedy than treaties, and the unsuspecting natives were, on approaching the Spanish troops, attacked and cut to pieces and their king taken prisoner. The anniversary of this day is celebrated in Palma as that on which the whole island submitted to the King of Spain and the Holy Church.

The end of the story of the Guanches is soon told. Their conquerors forgot as soon as convenient the precepts of the holy religion in the name of which the conquest had been made, and the cruelties and oppressions practised by them on the remaining inhabitants of the once Happy Islands are as horrible as any recorded of the sixteenth century. In Gomera, the governor, Hernand Peraza, being detected in an intrigue with a native woman, was killed by one of her relations in the act of quitting her cave. Goaded into rebellion, and encouraged by the murder of their tyrant, the Gomerans rose and imprisoned his widow, the beautiful and cruel Donna Beatrix Bobadilla, in the castle of the port, which was closely invested. Donna Beatrix sent word to Don Pedro de Vera, governor of Gran Canaria, to come and help her, which he did with men and ships; he raised the siege, released Donna Beatrix, and marched against the rebels, who had retired to a mountain fastness. By a stratagem he first made all the non-fighting Gomerans prisoners, and having induced the mutineers to surrender on the promise that they should pass out unharmed, he put all above fifteen years of age to death, 'some being hanged, others drowned, and others drawn asunder by horses,' and the women and children were sold as slaves. On hearing that the Gomerans in Gran Canaria had declared that they would treat anyone who offered an insult to their wives and daughters as

Hernand Peraza had been treated, he seized in one night about 200 Gomerans; the men he put to death, and the women and children he sold as slaves. Thus sadly the Guanches learnt the lessons of civilisation.

Of this interesting race scarcely any trace now remains. In Teneriffe, where the resistance had been less determined, the natives intermarried with their Spanish conquerors, and the type of the modern Teneriffian is obviously that of a mixed race; the Spanish character is also mollified by Guanche blood, and the Teneriffe people are known as being peculiarly gentle and docile. Gran Canaria was so depopulated by the long struggle that it was colonised from Spain, and the lands were divided among the colonists. Hierro became so bare that it was colonised from Flanders. Palma had the same fate. In Gomera the conquerors boasted that in a few years they had reduced the population to 1,000 natives, who were driven into the mountains. Of pure-blooded Guanches none remain. Sold into slavery, massacred, robbed of their possessions and degraded, thus perished miserably a race who, though uncultured, had learnt the secret of happiness and good government.

A STUDY IN GREY.

Poor Cookham Dene in a mild way was a disappointed man. He felt, though he did not own, that he had never been exactly appreciated. He was certain that his poor wife had not understood him. His daughter he did not expect to understand him; she was a mere child, or he thought so. In some vague way he felt that his wife had hung like a mill-stone round his neck; she had kept him back—how or from what he did not exactly know, but he had not made his mark, and he had always felt—at least up to a certain period of his life—that he should make his mark sooner or later; in what capacity he might have been puzzled to explain.

He had great gifts; his mother had told him so when he was a boy. He was a schoolmaster's pet, which perhaps is rather a bad sign; he ended by believing that he was a scholar, he was certainly a dreamer. He fancied that he had a literary turn, but was not quite certain about it. Art he despised; music he did not care for; he had no turn for science, but he thought novels rubbish, and prided himself on his good sense. He was rather shy, perhaps a little proud. Nobody sought him as a friend, and it did not occur to him that friends were to be sought. He had not struggled for either comfortable circumstances or a fair social position, but both had come to him, and in process of time a wife came also—how, he really hardly recollected. His mother and her relations had something to do with it, he occasionally reflected rather bitterly, but he led a lonely life, and felt that he was entitled to something, he hardly knew what, that had never been bestowed upon him, and he grew a little sour.

Then his wife died—faded away silently—and he was sorry; but still he felt that she had never understood him, and so too felt Maisie.

Maisie was growing a big girl now, and believed in her father implicitly, except when doubts obtruded themselves, as they will in the case even of the most faithful, and then she thrust them from her with indignation. She feared that her mother had never quite comprehended the great heart that had been given into her keeping; but she was sure that she

understood her father thoroughly and that he understood her, and that they were devoted to each other; still in this, as has been hinted, she happened to be mistaken.

She meant to keep house for her father, and minister to all his little wants; but her father had different ideas, and was glad to let her go away and live with some very old friends of her mother's. Maisie was grieved, perhaps a little irritated at this, but poor papa checked her remonstrances abruptly, and away she went. Papa, to tell the truth, was not very fond of Maisie. He fancied she had been petted by her mother, and he knew that her mother was not an intellectual woman, and he believed that Maisie was not intellectual either.

But Maisie thought she was different from other girls, and so the old friends to whom she had been consigned thought. They considered her pert, and rather disagreeable. Still they did not say so; being an excellent and patient old couple, they sought by degrees to bring ameliorating influences to bear.

A good many months rolled by, and papa's letters were short and infrequent. He told Maisie that he had had a cold in the head, that he had had the house painted, that he had bought a pair of boots and returned them as they were a bad fit, but he did not tell her anything of particular importance, and did not seem to pine for her return. She did not understand this; she had flattered herself that after her mother's decease they would be all in all to each other. Having an affectionate nature or an eye to effect, she had burned to pose as the devoted daughter.

One morning when she came down to breakfast old Mr. and Mrs. Brown, as we shall call them, wore grave countenances and looked at Maisie, as she could not help thinking, oddly. Then Mrs. Brown glanced at her husband and shrugged her shoulders, and Mr. Brown shrugged his, and went on munching his buttered toast with downcast eyes.

Maisie thought all this rather singular, but she was accustomed to the odd ways of the queer old couple, so made an excellent meal without in the least anticipating the pleasant little surprise that was in store for her.

The fact of the matter was, her dear father had been appreciated at last, by a remarkably pretty girl, too. Mr. and Mrs. Brown thought he must be mad, but he thought himself still a bit of a lady-killer. He had always considered himself such in his heart of hearts, but a strict sense of propriety had prevented his

saying so. He had fancied from time to time that young ladies in church or in omnibuses had glanced at him archly. No doubt he looked far short of his real age, at least such was his conviction, and he had an interesting appearance, as is the case with all men of intellect. He had married young, and just at the time when husbands are beginning to enjoy a wonderful recrudescence of juvenility wives have a trick of looking irritatingly old, or perhaps one's taste at fifty is not that of twenty-five. Anyhow, Mr. Cookham Dene felt that he had made a mistake; he was rather ashamed of his wife.

But when she withered away and died he was a little ashamed of himself, though it did not occur to him that he had been in anywise to blame, and he knew that she had made him happy, or at least comfortable, for many many years; but she had never understood or appreciated him, though, poor soul, she was perhaps scarcely to be blamed for that, her mind, such as it was, being entirely given over to household concerns.

Well, she was gone, and he was still in the prime of life, and he went his way—not rejoicing exactly, for every incident in his career somehow or other seemed tinged with a sense of melancholy disappointment—but he felt that he had elbow room, and that there was still a chance of at least an Indian summer, and so he met with his reward at last.

She was very pretty! she had a nice figure, and natural pale gold hair and rather steely blue eyes, and a winsome if tight little mouth with real teeth, which is rather rare nowadays, and an innocent childish manner. Also she had a neat foot and ankle, and a trim habit of dressing. But there was a drawback—a very slight one, Mr. Dene thought, Mr. and Mrs. Brown regarded the matter seriously—she had been an attendant in a boot shop. Beyond that nobody knew anything at all about her, where she came from, or who were her belongings, or if she had any.

There was nothing to be done. The marriage was a *fait accompli*. Mr. Brown opined, as might have been expected under the circumstances, that there was 'no fool like an old fool.' His wife broke the exasperating intelligence as gently as she could to her young guest, and Maisie—well, it would require the powers of a better story-teller than myself to describe her emotions.

She was not merely wounded to the quick, she trembled with rage. She could not believe what she heard; the possibility of such a catastrophe had never dawned upon her; she felt as if

some one had boxed her ears. She was dazed and stupefied, then she felt as if she should go mad. She could not sit quiet the whole day. They had told her nothing yet about the boot shop, or that mamma-in-law was pretty. Maisie had some pedigree pride.

Maisie had been rather well educated. Her mother had sent her to a nice school, and she not only had accomplishments but ladylike manners. But for her conceit she would have been a nice girl enough. She had sometimes hoped that she might grow up good-looking, but she did not believe that she was ugly—nor was she, but she prided herself on her cleverness, and that is a relative term.

Mr. and Mrs. Brown might have been odd people, but they were kind—more than kind, and told Maisie she might always consider their house her home. They did not suppose a pretty silly little woman like her mother-in-law would desire to have the trouble of looking after her. But the new Mrs. Cookham Dene, if silly in some respects, was wide enough awake in others, and, though of a babyfied aspect, had the spirit of a tyrant. Moreover she was jealous. She had not been well brought up, and she did not see why Maisie should be well brought up either. At all events she was not going to let the girl give herself airs.

So one day an imperative and formally grateful letter arrived from the head of the family, and his daughter had to be packed off back home again. Mrs. Brown said it was really too bad of that silly old fellow; her husband thought that perhaps on the whole they were well rid of the child. Good easy man, he dreaded complications, and he liked to see the household expenses kept down.

Maisie journeyed back home sorrowfully—indignantly, with a touch of dread. She knew now that her father held her of no account. She had misgivings relative to her mother-in-law. Mrs. Brown seemed to doubt whether she would be able to put the interloper into her right place, though Maisie had said that she meant to do so, that she did not intend her father to be imposed on. Had Maisie been a boy, perhaps she would never have gone home, but run away to sea, as the expression is. But girls are not wanted in the mercantile marine, and she had no money, and she was a bit cowed by the turn affairs had taken, and she was desperate. Oh, if only her mother-in-law could be struck dead by lightning, or if only she would obligingly tumble downstairs and break her neck! But Fortune was singularly apathetic.

When Maisie got home she noticed, as the cab drew up at the door, that everything looked amazingly spick-and-span. New paint everywhere, an efflorescence of scarlet geraniums, and the scrubby old garden a model of suburban propriety. New short window-blinds with brass bands, the front door chocolate and gold, and the ornamental ironwork, which used to be a dirty cream-colour, painted and gilded as if the once gloomy old villa had been turned into a seaside boarding house.

Inside, sticky new furniture, gaudy patterns, and plenty of gas just being lighted, though it was scarcely dusk.

A prim domestic. Everything quite *en règle*, but not in the best of taste. All the 'shabby old rubbish' that her mother had been so fond of banished. Papa, she learnt, was lying down with a headache; he was not to be disturbed. The promoted shop assistant was out and would not be back till dinner-time. Dinner! Good heavens! thought Maisie, who, in spite of her appetite, was of a frugal disposition. Only Phil was at home.

And here Phil came. A youth of a comical but blighted aspect. It was easy to see that he lived at war with his kind. A fondness for catapults was written on his face. His antic disposition was shown by an irresistible propensity to slide along the banisters instead of going downstairs properly. He had a crushed and brow-beaten expression, but whipcord in abundance surged from his pocket, and, though he spoke in a whisper, he was munching some sticky substance, and his eye roved in an unquenchable spirit of mischief.

'Well, Maisie,' he said, 'what do you think of it all, eh?'

He eyed her with gloomy inquisitiveness, and added, 'You will have to mind your "p's" and "q's," my dear.'

'Just look,' he proceeded; 'peep in there; would you ever have thought it the same room? Mustn't they have been making the money spin? I only came back from school yesterday, and I would rather be there than here. It's beastly slow. I am not allowed downstairs. I am glad you are come back; it will be somebody to talk to; and have you any money, Maisie? for I am getting tired of it, and mean to run away and enlist or something.'

Maisie's heart sank within her, but her mother-in-law's greeting, on her return in a neat little brougham, was quite gushingly affectionate.

Certainly she was pretty. Maisie was obliged to own that, pretty of course in a silly frivolous way, and her advances were

most conciliatory, but Maisie hated her with a blind unreasoning jealousy that made her tingle to the tips of her fingers, and was the more uncontrollable because she felt instinctively that she had to deal with a clever woman—not clever in an intellectual but in a more generally useful sense, and Maisie knew that her own strong point was not tact.

Everything had been turned topsy-turvy; money was no longer of any consequence. Mrs. Cookham Dene liked shopping and driving in the park, and half-past seven o'clock dinner and sparkling wines, and she dressed showily and played waltzes on the piano with more energy than strict attention to harmony, and she had very lively spirits and knew how to keep the servants in order, or at least to cow them for the time being, and when her 'dear papa,' as she called him, was not suffering from one of his rather frequent headaches which kept him a good deal to his room, she made such fun of the old darling, and so persistently held him up to the ridicule of her brother Tom, who happened to be staying in the house, and indeed seemed to have taken up his quarters there *en permanence*, that at last Maisie was driven to indignant remonstrance.

'You darling little pet,' said her mother-in-law, looking at her solemnly, 'you are awfully dutiful and we are awfully naughty, are we not, papa dear?' pressing her cheek affectionately against her old man's head, 'but perhaps you will kindly just hold your tongue and not speak till you are spoken to, or we shall have to order her off to bed, shall we not, papa dear?'

Brother Tom, who was a fine-looking young fellow, but with an unpleasant expression of face and rather uncouth habits, for which his sister frequently rebuked him, laughed hoarsely, and Mr. Dene, who looked tired and out of sorts and rather ashamed of himself, glanced at Maisie with a frown of dissatisfaction that sent her flying from the room.

Or rather she was in the act of flying when her charming little mother-in-law seized her by the wrist and drew her back.

'You are not your own mistress here,' she said; 'sit down again, as your father desires, and do not stir till you have permission.'

Maisie burst into tears. Her papa looked very much irritated. Brother Tom began to whistle. The ex-shopgirl bestowed a kiss on her husband and tripped to the piano.

Plenty of bills soon began to come in, but Mr. Cookham Dene,

who had always thought his former wife rather wasteful in her household expenditure, paid them without much murmuring. His sweet Dolly had such winning little ways, and 'he knew,' as she said, 'that if she teased him a little bit now and then, she did love her dear old man so, and he liked her to look pretty, and he liked her to enjoy herself, didn't he?'

Poor Phil had rather a rough time of it. He was not an engaging boy, and the spirit of mischief was to him as the breath of his nostrils. He hated brother Tom very heartily, and always had plenty of ingenious surprises in store for him, so that when upstairs Maisie was grieved more than once by a sound as of carpets being dusted, to an accompaniment of sobs and shrieks and savage growls.

And it was the more maddening as papa had always been opposed to corporal punishment, or rather her mother had been, but things were altered now. When she saw brother Tom come out of the room, cane in hand, oh! she hated him and told him so, but he only laughed and said it would do the little beggar good! As for Phil, he rubbed himself and made a hideous grimace behind the other's back. But brother Tom detected him by means of the looking-glass, aimed a parting but playful flick at him, saying, 'That's right, my lad, keep your pecker up, you shall have a double dose next time.'

Dolly insisted on Maisie taking some music lessons. 'You can't play a bit, my dear chit,' she said, 'only a lot of dreary stuff like five-finger exercises. You shall go through a course with "Madame" ——, who taught me.'

Now Maisie considered that her mamma-in-law played about as badly as was humanly possible, and she pinned her own faith to Mozart, but 'Madame,' who was rather loud both in appearance and manner, and who enjoyed a glass of champagne, which now flowed liked water at Chesapeake Villa, indeed much more frequently, agreed that all that old-fashioned sort of stuff had gone out with the Flood; and Maisie, who was now at the sensitive and self-complacent age of 'sweet seventeen,' was snubbed, and set down to 'nice little showy pieces,' as her new mamma said, 'which would count for something of an evening.'

Dolly professed to be very fond of 'her Maisie.' She called her 'chitty,' and insisted on kissing her, and said she was a quaint old-fashioned darling. She insisted on taking her out for drives and to the theatre, whither brother Tom often accompanied the

two, provided farcical comedy or burlesque were the order of the day; Mr. Cookham Dene, by the bye, generally staying at home; and she insisted on improving her toilet, but Maisie did not consider the rather sweeping changes made an improvement at all. Indeed she remonstrated with her father on the subject, but he frowned and spoke of 'perpetual worry, and ingratitude, and rebellious children,' so she retired in discomfiture to incur the raillery of her mother-in-law. 'Oh, you good demure little puss,' she said, 'we are not going to let you dress like an old frump; you are really quite a nice-looking girl, or would be if you were a little more cheerful, and I mean that you shall have a proper chance in life.'

Mrs. Dene was fond of going to races. So was brother Tom—very, but he was not always fortunate in his betting transactions, though he prided himself on his astuteness. They generally went by road, and always took a luncheon basket and champagne with them, and invariably met many friends like themselves of a free and unrestrained spirit; but if the fates were adverse to Tom's pecuniary success he was apt to become quarrelsome, especially if he had taken quite enough refreshment, and once savagely shook his fist in his sister's face. But she did not seem much disconcerted, though Maisie shuddered and turned faint.

Dolly maintained that she took a great interest in Maisie. She spoke as if she had a deep sense of a mother's responsibilities, and as if her daughter-in-law were a charming little simpleton; which Maisie bitterly resented—knowing her own capacity, and that her new relative was not in the least intellectual.

'You will make a delightful little bride, chit,' she said one day, 'and we will find you a husband. You are quite of a marriageable age, and girls of your type do not improve by being kept on hand. You would do capitally for brother Tom.'

And ever after this, in her playful mock-serious way, she spoke as if it were quite a settled thing. Brother Tom took his cue and became very objectionable. Then, too, Dolly would insist on taking such an interest in Maisie's wardrobe, and Dolly's taste was in the direction of rather a pronounced style.

Another person of some consequence soon began to appear on the scene—brother Tom's lawyer. He was not a favourable specimen of his tribe, at least to judge by appearances. He was tall and ill-made, though indeed moral obliquity is not a necessary concomitant of an ungainly figure, but he had pale blue shifty

eyes with red rims, and a complexion suggestive of late hours and irregular habits, Dundreary whiskers of a sandy hue, and a trick of alternately fawning and bullying.

He was closeted with Mr. Cookham Dene a good deal.

It was about this time that, in the opinion of those who knew him best, my poor friend's mental powers began to show signs of decay.

Brother Tom had another friend—an outside broker, in whose tips he had tolerably profound faith, not imagining for a moment that anyone would dare to try to take him in. Brother Tom doubted if anybody would succeed even if they did try; indeed he was pretty certain failure would be the result. And if brother Tom had faith in himself, Dolly, who really thought her brother a very fine fellow, believed in him implicitly. If he had not been successful hitherto, it was only because of some 'unlucky conthrathong,' as Captain Costigan would say, or because he had not been able to sit long enough at the table. With proper resources, worlds would be his to conquer.

Dolly, like a good many ladies, thought even four per cent. an inadequate rate of interest. But times were bad for investors, and if you cannot increase your rate of interest the next best thing is to double or quadruple your principal. This brother Tom, with the help of his friend, the outside broker, offered to do. He saw his way clearly—so did the outside broker, who disappeared one evening with his pockets full and leaving those of his client uncommonly empty.

However, Tom tried again—this time on the turf, but the blind goddess was still deaf to his wooing. After this he sampled inferior brands of whisky for a week or two with great assiduity, and then he began to see snakes.

Mr. Cookham Dene in the meanwhile had developed a religious turn, and was becoming rather hazy in his ideas. He began to study unfulfilled prophecy; and Dolly losing heart, a reign of domestic muddle ensued.

Her husband made a will, and it was the conviction of those best qualified to form an opinion that he was breaking up fast, that he could not last much longer.

However, as his mental powers decayed, he seemed about to take a new lease of life. He became wonderfully and fearfully chirpy, and this filled Tom with wrath.

He would lounge in now and then and eye his victim gloomily.

'How much longer do you think the old boy will hold out?' he inquired of his sister one day, and she only shrugged her pretty shoulders. 'Hulloa, daddy!' he shouted, addressing himself to the poor old gentleman, who sat in a meek but dignified attitude by the fire, 'when will the Jews be grafted in again, eh? Pretty soon,' he added to himself with a bitter laugh, 'if I can't lay hands on the "ready."'

Poor papa was fond of stroking Dolly's hair as she knelt beside him; he did not say much, and what he did say was not always quite intelligible, but he looked at Maisie as if she had done him an injury.

Phil had been sent to a different sort of school. 'Terms, 20*l.* a year, inclusive. Diet unlimited. Cow kept,' and so on. But he was a big fellow for his age, and ran away. He was brought back and caned, but ran away again, and after that nobody troubled much about him.

One day a remarkably seedy individual took up his position in the kitchen. He was civil enough, but smoked a pipe, and always would keep his hat on, and smelt rather. The servants, after haranguing their mistress in scornful terms, disappeared into the gathering twilight. Maisie was overcome with bitter indignation and shame. But Dolly made light of it all. Brother Tom conversed with the seedy individual affably. He said it was the 'restoration of the Jews.'

The next morning, when Dolly knocked at her husband's door, she had to knock twice. Indeed, she need not have knocked at all. He was so fast asleep that there was no reason why Maisie should be kept away from him any longer; for they had always been rather afraid of her influence.

The funeral was not a very grand affair. Brother Tom was remarkably bloodshot about the eyes, let us hope from grief, but his utterance was thick, and he seemed scarcely secure of his footing.

There was not much left out of the wreck.

Maisie strapped to, and got a berth as a nursery governess, but in a week or two broke down utterly. They sent her to the hospital. She emerged a pitiable object, but there was nobody in particular to pity her. She wrote to Mrs. Brown, but the letter came back through the dead-letter office. They had given up their house, and their address was unknown.

Phil could not do much to help. He had enlisted, and a

creditable career lay before him. He was a lance-corporal. His wife was a good creature, but homely. She was on the 'strength of the regiment,' and took in washing. But she had a tongue like the east wind, and, her husband's emoluments not being large, she objected to money being spent out of the family.

Brother Tom applied himself with increased energy to testing the effects of alcohol on the animal economy.

One autumn evening Maisie stood in the roar of the Strand, almost stupid with exhaustion and feeling the keen wind acutely. She had no underclothing to speak of, and was too faint to feel very hungry. Had she stood there five minutes previously, she would have met Mr. and Mrs. Brown.

The last time I saw Dolly, she was in the act of alighting from a victoria in the Brompton Road. She had a bright complexion, and vouchsafed me a gracious nod and smile. Certainly she is a *piquante* little thing, and has, I believe, a good many admirers.

Perhaps, if poor Cookham Dene had not craved for appreciation, and if he could have refrained from worrying his wife to death, a good many of the incidents that I have had to record might not have happened.

ST. JEAN DE LUZ.

THE ups and downs of the world often bring about great changes in the relative positions both of persons and places, and this is strikingly illustrated in the histories of the little town of St. Jean de Luz and its brilliant *parvenu* neighbour Biarritz.

Time was when Biarritz was a poor little fishing hamlet lying in a waste of wind-blown sandhills—the world forgetting, and by the world forgot. It lay some two miles off the great highway to Spain, and was unknown even by name to the kings and ministers and great lords and generals who ever and anon passed like splendid comets on their way to or from the frontier.

St. Jean de Luz was where they halted to break their journey. It was ten miles nearer the Spanish frontier, and was then a town of considerable importance, both on account of its size, its trade, and from being the most advanced outpost of France.

In the Middle Ages it had a population of 10,000—not altogether given to orthodoxy, it would seem, for no less than five hundred persons were here put to death for the crime of sorcery towards the end of the sixteenth century. Perhaps the presence of a large colony of Gitanos had something to do with this unholy tendency. They were a people known to be loose in their religious ideas, and more than suspected of having direct dealings with the Evil One. It was, indeed, widely believed that they never died. It was said that no dead gipsy nor yet any gipsy's grave had ever been seen. The mere suspicion of this unhallowed immunity from death was reason enough for hating them, as it is only human nature to hate anybody who differs from his fellow-men.

The authorities were much disquieted by this belief, and they even captured and imprisoned certain aged gipsies to see whether or no they would die. The misery of the poor creatures was excessive when they understood for what object they were confined. Some, it is said, on being released, immediately *disappeared*, but none were ever known to die.

Their marriage customs, too, were heathenish and singular: the betrothed couple went before the chief of their tribe, and in his presence dashed an earthen vessel on the ground. The chief

then counted the potsherds and pronounced the couple man and wife for as many years as there were pieces.

It is plain that the duration of such marriages must have depended greatly on the amount of energy Love lent to the bridegroom's arm.

St. Jean de Luz is a sunny little town situated on a large land-bound bay, and is interesting both by reason of its grievous misfortunes and its departed glory. In the heyday of its prosperity it was able to equip a fleet of forty whaling boats, in which its fearless fishermen pursued leviathan even to the coasts of Iceland and Newfoundland, long before the days when Columbus discovered the New World or fishery treaties were thought of. They claim to have been the inventors of the harpoon, for which the whales at least owe them no thanks.

The crowning glory, however, of the little town was in its being selected by Louis XIV. as the scene of his marriage with Maria-Theresa, the Infanta of Spain, which was celebrated with the greatest possible magnificence in 1660. So deeply did the town appreciate the tremendous honour done to it, that the door by which the Grand Monarque left the church was promptly bricked up, that its threshold might never be profaned by any foot less worshipful.

St. Jean de Luz is a pure Basque town, and the church, though built by the English during the 300 years that they occupied Guienne and Gascony, is a fine example of Basque architecture. The tower is quaint and squat, with two short diminishing octagon stories. There are three tiers of galleries running round the interior of the church, according to Basque custom, which assigns them to the use of the men, while the floor of the nave is given up to the women. The roof is painted blue and besprinkled with gold stars, while the choir is rich with carving and gilding relieved against a deep red background.

The Château Louis XIV., in which the King and his bride remained some weeks, is a small unpretentious building with four airy little *tourelles* jutting out mysteriously from fan-shaped brackets which seem to provide very inadequate support. On the southern side are three deep shadowy verandahs, romantic and Moorish, well suited for lovers' meetings. The ground floor is now used as a café; the principal room is extremely low, and made to appear still lower by the immense beams which cross the ceiling. Not many years ago a curious old painting representing the

marriage of the King hung outside the house, but it is no longer there.

A bowshot from the château is the house in which the Infanta took up her brief abode previous to her marriage, and another house is pointed out as the one in which Mazarin twice slept, once on his way to the Ile de Conférence, to conclude the famous Treaty of the Pyrenees with the Spaniards in 1657, and again when he arranged the marriage of the King with the Infanta.

Here too Wellington fixed his head quarters during the winter of 1813–14, and the whole surrounding country has been one vast battle-field. The grand sombre mass of La Rhune, at whose feet St. Jean seems to lie, is a monument marking the burial-place of many of our soldiers. Its heights were occupied by the French, and were taken by our troops after severe fighting and heavy loss, as can well be imagined by anyone who has ever toiled up its steep bare sides.

La Rhune disputes with Bayonne the distinction of having been the place where the *bayonnette* was first used; the tradition runs that in a battle with the Spaniards, the Basques' ammunition having run short, they fastened their tremendous knives on to the muzzles of their guns and thus invented the bayonet. It is true that the name supports the rival claim, but names are often veritable will-o'-the-wisps, and will lead the unwary into a slough of error. Is it not popularly believed that Bath bricks comes from Bath, even as Bath buns do; and that the Bridgwater Canal is connected with the town of Bridgwater? And yet both these beliefs are erroneous—as erroneous as the equally common one that Bright's disease was so named from being a malady our great Quaker statesman suffered from.

The misfortunes which from time to time have overwhelmed St. Jean de Luz have been due partly to man—it having twice been cruelly sacked by the Spaniards—but chiefly to the malevolence of the ocean. In 1675 it was almost wiped out by the sea, and since then has been partially destroyed so frequently that its population sank at one time as low as 2,000, and its trade was wholly ruined. Hitherto all the efforts of the best engineers have had no more than temporary success. A splendid granite breakwater constructed by Louis XVI. was utterly destroyed during a hurricane towards the end of last century.

Then in 1819 a cyclopean wall of masonry, fifty feet wide and thirty feet high, was raised like a fortification between the town

and the sea. But Poseidon resented this puny defiance, and, rising in his might, destroyed it in 1822, so totally as not to leave one stone upon another, and the engineers sent to report upon it were constrained to admit that not a fragment remained.

Undeterred by all these failures, the present Government has since been constructing a huge breakwater, projecting from the fort of Socoa, which commands the entrance to the harbour, and the work of piling together the gigantic blocks of concrete still goes on steadily, if slowly. It may be destined to succeed where other attempts have failed; but so tremendous is the force of the Atlantic rollers on this coast, that it is questionable if any work of human hands can resist it successfully. Napoleon's breakwater at Biarritz was built with square concrete blocks weighing forty tons apiece. But it was soon destroyed, and the blocks were rolled about like pebbles in the tremendous surf. During a storm in 1868 one of them was carried completely over the pier, as if it had been a cork, though the pier is 22 feet above low-water mark.

I believe that engineers are of opinion that nothing can ultimately save St. Jean de Luz, and that it is only a question of a hundred or two hundred years before the town is swallowed up by the greedy ocean.

The drive of ten miles from Biarritz to St. Jean is a very charming one, with the tumbling surf-fringed sea on one hand, and the jagged outline of the Pyrenean range on the other, rising blue and majestic beyond the broken wooded foreground. The country of the Basques is entered at Bidart, a village on the cliff, with all the Basque characteristics well marked. Its red and white houses—each with the short side of its unequal gabled roof to the sunny south, and the long side extending protectingly to the north—are scattered at random by ones or twos on the hill-side without any approach to a row or a street. Each is sturdily independent, and all look comfortable, neat, and well-to-do.

Voltaire jestingly described the Basques as '*un petit peuple qui saute et danse sur les Pyrénées.*' They are, in truth, a cheerful, light-hearted race, much given to dancing, and yet more to tennis-playing, which latter amusement is an absolute passion with them. A Basque baby asks for no toys but a ball and a wall, for no sooner can he toddle than he begins to play Fives. No wall is held sacred, and though every village has its Fives-court, it is necessary to put notices on church walls, and other

smooth and inviting ones, that it is '*défendu de jouer à la paume contre ce mur*.'[1] In the summer great matches are played between the French and Spanish Basques, which are equivalent to our University boatraces. Scores of thousands of Basques then pour down from their mountain homes and sit cheerfully in the burning sun from morn to dewy eve, eagerly following the fortunes of their favourite heroes.

They have a fondness for bright colour that makes their country very cheerful to a stranger's eye. Their houses are invariably of dazzling whiteness, and roofed with resplendent scarlet tiles. And these cheerful colours are repeated in their dress, which consists of white shirt, scarlet sash, a dark-blue *béret*, or round, flat cap, and short jacket. Their feet are shod with silence, for their white canvas shoes, laced with red and blue tapes, are soled with plaited hemp, which renders their wearer as noiseless as a cat.

The origin of the Basque race is so ancient as to be lost in the mists of time, and the most opposite theories are held with regard to it. The only points on which I believe all ethnologists agree are the extreme antiquity of the Basques as a distinct race, and the impossibility of connecting them with any known race of Aryan descent. Some have held that they are descended from Noah's son Japhet, by his fifth son, Tubal, who emigrated to Europe *before the confusion of tongues*, and therefore transmitted the language of Paradise in all its purity to his descendants. This theory has the double merit of being bold and difficult to refute. Certain it is that their language is curiously distinct from all other known tongues. It is extremely difficult to acquire, and there is a French saying—useful as a means of exasperating a Basque, if desired—that '*le diable lui-même a passé huit ans dans le pays Basque sans qu'il a pu apprendre la langue*.'

One authority says that in the Basque tongue 'the undoubtedly native words for *cutting instruments* seem all to have their root *from words signifying stone or rock*, while all such words *as imply the use of metal seem to be borrowed*. The language, as it were, represents the Stone Age, before the use of metals was known!'

Another tells us that their dances are distinctly of astronomical

[1] The game is usually spoken of in English as tennis, but its real name is *jeu de paume*, and it far more resembles fives. It is played with the hand, or with a basket-work scoop strapped on to the hand.

significance, and must date from the time when their ancestors emigrated from Asia to the Pyrenees; and he sums up his arguments by pronouncing the Basques to be the *débris* of the primitive peoples of Asia, and the unique representatives of that prehistoric race. In M. Garat's own words: 'I have attempted to throw light on this remarkable people, their incredible antiquity, their Semitic origin, and the purity of their descent, and to show that they, as much as the Israelites under the Patriarchs, are entitled to call themselves God's people.'

I have said enough to show that, whichever theory may be the right one, there is no doubt that the Basques are a people of singular interest. It is true that the only two men of world-wide fame that their country has produced have been St. Francis Xavier and Ignatius Loyola. But it must be remembered that the Basque race is, numerically, a small one—considerably under half a million some ten years ago—and that their mountainous country and their unique language alike have tended to isolate them from the rest of the world.

They have in them a strong dash of Moorish blood, dating from the time when the Saracens invaded France and were utterly discomfited at Poitiers by Charles Martel. Many of the fugitives took refuge among the Basques, and, being hospitably received, they cast in their lot with their protectors, and by intermarriage became gradually fused with them. The Arab practice of medicine is said even yet to linger among the Basques, and many of their surnames are Moorish or of Arabic origin.

A curious custom among them mentioned by Count Henry Russell, and which he says is called a *toberac*, has its exact counterpart in Somersetshire, where it is known as *rough music* or *skimmity-riding*. The occasion in either case is the villagers' desire to express their indignation at some striking lapse from the path of virtue on the part of one of their number. The ceremony takes place after dark, when the performers parade near the offender's house and make night hideous by an appalling din of bells, oxhorns, tin pans, and other such instruments of torture.

They doubtless find it answer the same double purpose of amusing themselves and vexing their victim as the music of the Scotch pipers formerly did. Froissart says of it that 'it may be heard four miles off, to the great dismay of their enemies and their own delight.' He further tells us that when the English army approached within a league of the Scots the latter 'began

to play such a concert that it seemed as if all the devils in hell had come thither to join in the noise, so that those of the English who had never before heard such were much frightened.'

In Somersetshire the concerts of rough music sometimes lead to proceedings at law; but the musicians are usually backed by strong public opinion, and have, in consequence, an amount of moral weight not easily defied.

On the occasion of our first visit to St. Jean de Luz we were struck by the number of persons we met leading or carrying white pigs, and we began to think that pigs must again be in fashion as pets, as they appear to have been at Bayonne in the seventeenth century. In the letters of a French lady of quality written in 1679,[1] she tells us that 'some of the ladies who came to see me at Bayonne brought little sucking-pigs under their arms, as we do little dogs. It is true they were very spruce, for most of them had coloured ribbons tied round their necks and tails. . . . When they dance, they must set them down and let these grunting animals run about the chamber, where they make a very unpleasing harmony.'

The matter, however, was presently explained by our discovering that a cattle market was being held. Many hundreds of horned cattle were there, besides donkeys, ponies, mules, and pigs. The cattle used in this part of France for agricultural and draught purposes are of a very handsome tawny-coloured breed, of great size—very similar, I should imagine, to the Charolais breed used in the Morvan. They are strong, beautiful creatures, soft-eyed and sleek, and fetch from 300fs. to 500fs. apiece.

For milking purposes the small black-and-white Breton breed is used. They are extremely insignificant in appearance when compared with the stately tawny cattle, but their milk is rich and abundant.

We noticed that many of the ponies had their ears split, and we were told that the ponies bred on the slopes of La Rhune were marked in this way, and were a very hardy, useful breed.

The writer of the old letters already quoted broke her journey—as all travellers at that time did—at St. Jean de Luz, and says: 'We were well entertained, for our table was covered with wild fowls; but our beds were not answerable, being stuck with feathers whose pinions ran into our sides.'

The lady was on her way to Madrid, and I cannot refrain from

[1] Cositas Españolas.

quoting a little sketch she gives of manners in Spain at that time. Speaking of servants in great families, she says: 'The Spaniards give but two reals (*5d.*) a day both for food and wages, but then the servants live only upon onions, peas, and such mean stuff, which makes them as greedy as dogs. The pages and footmen are kept so very hungry that in carrying the dishes to the table they eat half the victuals that is in them. I advised my kinswoman to get a little silver stewpan made, fastened with a padlock, like that I saw of the Archbishop of Burgos, and this she did. So now, after the cook has filled it, he looks through a little grate to see whether the soup does well, *and thus the pages get nothing of it but the steam.* Before this invention it happened a hundred times that when we thought to have taken broth, we found neither that nor any flesh.'

Is it possible that any custom of the present day will seem as quaint to our descendants two hundred years hence as this naïve narration does to us now? The world moves slowly; but when we look back a couple of centuries we see that its progress has been greater than we might think.

A VOLUNTARY TESTIMONIAL.

BY ONE WHO KNEW HER.

UNDER the 'daisy quilt,'
  Snug, in the sun,
Old Sally's tucked away—
  Her story's done.
Friends, an old friend lies
  Under this knoll—
Grèen in our memories
  Lives a Good Doll!

When a fickle world frowned
  On poor babes in disgrace,
What comfort we found
  In her pink, smiling face!
How oft for some mourner,
  Dear Sally, you drew
It's sting from 'the Corner'
  By 'cornering,' too!

Her end . . . it's ill talking
  Of griefs while they're green;
But her funeral—'walking'—
  Was a sight to have seen.
Inky-plumed, sable-suited,
  Four friends bore the pall
To—right dolesomely tooted—
  The Dead March in *Saul!*

. . . . .

O Robin, sing sweetly!
  Columbines, wave!
Leaves, rustle lovingly
  Over her grave.
Children, step lightly,
  And, should ye draw near,
Hats off, politely:
  A Good Doll sleeps here!

PAGANINIANA.

When a man is forced to the expedient of publishing a letter from his mother to disprove that he is a son of the devil he must be in dire straits. And in dire straits Paganini, the most extraordinary of all violin *virtuosi*, assuredly was, almost from the beginning to the end of his phenomenal and romantic career. His father, who evidently believed thoroughly in the 'spare the rod and spoil the child' maxim, made of him a tolerable violinist before he was six years of age, and this as much by a course of systematic and unmerciful thrashing as by the aid of the youth's genius. It was this early and severe forcing which no doubt sent Paganini into professional life the tall, weakly, skeleton-like figure which, together with the perfectly novel and astonishing character of his performance, led to the absurd rumours associated with his name. When he gave his first concert in Paris in 1831 he was described as having a long pale face, large nose, brilliant little eyes like those of an eagle, long curling black hair which fell upon the collar of his coat, extremely thin, and altogether a gaunt, wiry being, in some respects only the shadow of a man. One of the critics spoke of his wrist and long bony fingers as being so flexible that they 'could only be compared to a handkerchief tied to the end of a stick.' When he came to London in the same year, people characterised his appearance as more like that of a devotee about to suffer martyrdom than one likely to delight with his art. There is a curious letter of his own, written at this time, in which he complained of the 'excessive and noisy admiration' to which he was a victim in London, which left him no rest, and actually blocked his passage from the Opera House every time he played. 'Although the public curiosity to see me,' says he, 'is long since satisfied, though I have played in public at least thirty times, and my likeness has been reproduced in all possible styles and forms, yet I can never leave my house without being mobbed by people who are not content with following and jostling me, but actually get in front of me and prevent me going either way, address me in English, of which I do not know a word, and even feel me, as if to find out if I am flesh and blood. And this not only the common people, but even the upper classes.'

It is sufficiently amusing to think of the public, and especially

the 'upper classes,' taking means to prove to themselves that there was some substance in the shadow which electrified them on their concert platforms. Embarrassing as their attentions must have been, there is some suspicion that Paganini looked upon the whole thing as a good advertisement. He has even been charged with having himself originated many of the ridiculous rumours which he seemed always so anxious to disprove. It is doubtful, however, if any man would attribute the results of many years' unwearied study and practice to Satanic aid, or report his own imprisonment to account for a facility which, it was supposed, could only have come from solitary confinement. These things were said and were believed. Paganini himself writes: 'At Vienna one of the audience affirmed publicly that my performance was not surprising, for he had distinctly seen, while I was playing my variations, the devil at my elbow, directing my arm and guiding my bow. My resemblance to the devil was a proof of my origin.' The marvellous execution which he had attained on the G string alone of his instrument was set down to his being incarcerated for eight years, during which time all his strings had broken except the fourth, upon which he practised during the whole period of his confinement. There was, of course, not a word of truth in this story. Paganini was never in prison for an hour, as he took very good care to prove by establishing the chronology of his travels and sojourns at various places. The devil, however, seems to have given him a good deal of trouble one way or another. It was at Prague that he published the letter from his mother to prove that he was really of flesh and blood as other men. The production was quite a serious affair; but it was evidently without the desired effect, for later on he considered it advisable to furnish Fétis, the French historian, with all the necessary material and dates to refute publicly the numerous absurdities circulated regarding him!

Many curious adventures were associated with Paganini's career as an artist. Some of these he tells himself; others are recorded by various biographers. One day at Leghorn a nail had run into his heel, and he came on to the platform limping, which greatly amused the audience. He was just about to place the bow on the strings when the candles of his desk fell out, and again the expectant listeners laughed. After the first few bars of the solo the first string broke, which increased the hilarity; but the piece was played through on three strings, and, says Paganini himself, 'the sneers quickly changed into

general applause.' At Ferrara he narrowly escaped being lynched. In those days it seems the common people of the suburbs of that little town looked upon the dwellers in the town itself as 'a set of asses!' Hence, we read, 'any countryman a resident of the suburbs, if asked where he came from, never replied "From Ferrara," but put up his head and began braying like an ass!' Now, unluckily for him, as it proved, Paganini could imitate with his violin the braying of an ass as well as do other wonderful things. In the course of a concert at Ferrara some one in the pit had hissed. It was an outrage which must be revenged, but no one suspected anything when, at the close of the programme, Paganini proposed to imitate the voices of various animals. After having reproduced the notes of different birds, the mewing of a cat, the barking of a dog, and so on, he advanced to the footlights, and calling out, 'This is for those who hissed,' imitated in an unmistakable manner the braying of a donkey. The effect produced was magical, but not at all what the player had probably expected. The audience, taking the significant 'hee-haw' as an allusion to themselves, rose almost to a man, rushed through the orchestra, climbed the stage, and would undoubtedly have strangled the daring fiddler if he had not taken to instantaneous flight. After this it was hardly necessary for his biographer to tell us that 'Paganini never visited the town again.' In this case, undoubtedly, discretion was the better part of valour.

The *furore* created by Paganini's appearance in various places has only been equalled in modern times by the Jenny Lind mania. Shopkeepers called their goods after him; everything, from canes to cravats, was *à la Paganini*; even a good stroke at billiards came to be termed *un coup à la Paganini*. At Vienna, where he met with what is described as 'a paroxysm of enthusiasm,' a cabman worried him into permission to print on his vehicle the words 'Cabriolet de Paganini,' the conveyance having been once hired by the *virtuoso* during a heavy shower. It was an excellent stroke of business on the part of Jehu. The hero-worshippers soon enabled him to make enough money to start in business as a hotel-keeper, in which capacity the great violinist no doubt patronised him when he was next in the city.

Paganini, like most musicians, had his share of eccentricity. When he was in Paris in the thirties a Court concert was announced at the Tuileries, and he was asked to play. He agreed, and went to have a look at the room just before the concert. The

curtains, he found, were hung in such a way as to interfere with the sound, and he requested the superintendent to have things properly arranged. The self-sufficient official paid no heed to the request, and Paganini was so offended by his manners that he determined not to play. The hour of the concert came, but no Paganini. The audience waited for some time, and at last a messenger was despatched to the hotel where the *virtuoso* was staying. Had the violinist gone out? No, he was in the hotel, but—he had gone to bed some hours since! Once, at Birmingham, a prosaic magistrate compelled him to pay for his eccentricity. This was before the time of railways, when everybody travelled as Mr. Ruskin would have everybody travel now. Paganini was on his way from London to Birmingham to fulfil an engagement. It seems he had the habit of getting out of the postchaise whenever the horses were changed, in order, as the Scotchman would say, to 'straucht his legs.' Sometimes he would extend his promenade so far that the coach was kept waiting for his return longer than the patience of the driver would stretch. This occurred once too often, and Paganini was left behind. At the next station a postchaise was despatched in search of him; he was found in a towering passion, and, as he refused to pay the cost of the conveyance, he was taken before the magistrate, who, unfortunately for him, did not see the necessity of indulging his eccentricity, and mulcted him in damages.

There was undoubtedly something of the charlatan about Paganini. Thomas Moore says he constantly abused his powers: 'he *could* play divinely, and *does* so sometimes for a minute or two; but then come his tricks and surprises, his bow in convulsions, and his enharmonics, like the mewings of an expiring cat.' Mystery had great charms for him. For a long time he puzzled the best violinists by tuning his instrument in different ways, and, as he always took particular care never to do this tuning within hearing, many of his feats on the platform appeared inexplicable and impossible. Violinists implored him unavailingly to show them how he produced his effects. He would get a little group together, begin to play, and just as he had reached the difficult passage every one longed to see done, he would peer into the faces of his listeners, suddenly stop, and exclaim, 'And so forth, gentlemen!' Mystery, again, surrounded his *répertoire*. He very seldom played any other music than his own; and although he occasionally took part in a quartett or a concerto by one of the great masters, he made no effect with it. He used to

say that if he played another composer's work he was obliged to arrange it to suit his peculiar style, and it was less trouble to write a piece for himself. If by any chance he did play a classical work he invariably took such liberties with it as enabled him to display his powers in his own way. Publishers sought to purchase his compositions, but he set such an exorbitant price on them that treating with him was out of the question. No doubt he did this designedly. At his concerts he was always careful never to allow any other violinist to see his music on paper; and when he did practise, which was seldom in later life, it was always in private.

There is a strong suspicion of quackery about all this; yet, as one of his biographers has said, the extraordinary effect of his playing could have had its source only in his extraordinary genius. If genius be 'the power of taking infinite pains,' he certainly showed it in a wonderful degree. Fétis tells us that he was known to have tried the same passage in a thousand different ways during ten or twelve hours, and to be completely overwhelmed with fatigue at the end of the day. The word 'difficulty' had no place in his vocabulary. The most intricate music of the day was but child's play to him, as a certain painter at Parma once found, much to his chagrin. This gentleman discredited the common belief that Paganini could get through the most difficult music at first sight. He possessed a valuable Cremona violin, which he offered to present to the *virtuoso* if he could perform, straight off, a manuscript concerto which he placed before him. 'This instrument is yours,' said he, 'if you can play in a masterly manner that concerto at first sight.' 'In that case, my friend,' replied Paganini, 'you may bid adieu to it at once,' which the painter, according to the bargain, found he had to do a few minutes later. Mere perfection of *technique*, however, would never have thrown the whole of musical Europe into the state of excitement produced by Paganini wherever he appeared. 'With the first notes his audience was spellbound; there was in him—though certainly not the evil spirit suspected by the superstitious—a dæmonic element which irresistibly took hold of those who came within its sphere.' Moscheles was not a man to be excited over nothing, and he wrote: 'His constant and daring flights, his newly discovered flageolet tones, his gift of fusing and beautifying subjects of the most diverse kind—all these phases of genius so completely bewilder my musical perceptions that for days afterwards my head is on fire and my brain reels.' The Scotch people, who had not yet forgotten their own Niel Gow—

the 'man who played the fiddle weel'—were almost terrified by his cleverness and appearance. In one town he came on the platform, cast a ghostly glance around the crowded hall, and, extending his right arm, held the bow pointing to the right, and immediately began to send forth mysterious music with the fingers of his left hand. Softer and softer grew the music, until at last he brought down the bow on the strings with such force that several people fainted with fear. So intense was the excitement that at the close of the performance the audience felt a painful relief.

It was generally supposed during his lifetime that Paganini had more regard for bank-notes than for musical notes—that, in fact, he was a heartless, selfish miser. It is true that, as a rule, he was very chary with his money (he died worth 80,000*l.*), but that he was also occasionally generous is amply proved by several incidents in his career. One of his last concerts was given at Turin for the benefit of the poor. He gave Berlioz, the great French composer, the large sum of 20,000 francs, simply as a mark of admiration for the latter's 'Symphonie Fantastique.' But better than this was the manner of his befriending a little Italian whom he found playing on the streets of Vienna. The boy confided to him that he supported his sick mother by his playing, and that he had come from the other side of the Alps. Paganini was touched at once. He literally emptied his pockets into the lad's hand, and, taking his poor instrument from him, began 'the most grotesque and extraordinary performance possible.' Presently there was quite a crowd around the curious pair, and Paganini, concluding his solo, went round with the hat. A splendid collection was the result, and after handing this to the boy Paganini walked off with his companion, remarking, 'I hope I have done a good turn to that little animal.' With Paganini anyone belonging to the lower orders was always addressed as an 'animal.' When such an individual dared to speak to him he would turn his back and inquire of his companion, 'What does this animal want with me?'

It has been said that 'he who loves children can't be a bad man,' and if there is any truth in the remark Paganini must have been less black than he has sometimes been painted. He had a little son whom he wished the world to know by the high-sounding names of Alexander Cyrus Achilles, though at home he was content to call him simply Achillino. A friend once called to take Paganini to the theatre where he was to play in a concert in the evening, arranged between the acts. This is the description

the friend gives of how he found him: 'I went to Paganini's lodgings, and I cannot easily describe the disorder of the whole apartment. On the table was one violin, on the sofa another. The diamond snuff-boxes which sovereigns had given him were one on the bed and one of them among his child's toys; music, money, caps, matches, letters, and boots pell-mell here and there; chairs, table, and even the bed removed from their place, a perfect chaos, and Paganini in the midst of it. A black silk cap covered his still deeper black hair, a yellow tie loose round his neck, and a jacket of a chocolate colour hung on him as on a peg. He had Achillino in his lap, who was very ill-tempered because he had to have his hands washed. Suddenly he broke loose from his father, who said to me, "I am quite in despair; I don't know what to do with him; the poor child wants amusement, and I am nearly exhausted playing with him." Barely were the words out of his mouth, when Achillino, armed with his little wooden sword, provoked his father to deadly combat. Up got Paganini, catching hold of an umbrella to defend himself. It was too funny to see the long thin figure of Paganini in slippers retreating from his son, whose head barely reached up to his father's knees. He made quite a furious onslaught on his father, who, retreating, shouted, "Enough, enough! I am wounded!" but the little rascal would not be satisfied ere he saw his adversary tumble and fall down vanquished on the bed. But the time passed and we had to be off, and now the real comedy began. He wanted his white necktie, his polished boots, his dress-coat. Nothing could be found. All was hidden away. And by whom? By his son Achillino. The little one giggled the whole time, seeing his father with long strides travelling from one end of the room to the other seeking his clothes. "What have you done with all my things?" he asked. "Where have you hidden them?" The boy pretended to be very much astonished and perfectly dumb. He shrugged his shoulders, inclined his head sideways, and mimically indicated that he knew nothing whatever of the mishap. After a long search the boots were discovered under the pillow-case, the necktie was lying quietly in one of the boots, the coat was hidden in the portmanteau, and in the drawer of the dinner-table, covered with napkins, was the waistcoat! Every time Paganini found one of the missing objects he put it on in triumph, perpetually accompanied by the little man, who was delighted to see his father looking for the things where he knew they could not be found; but Paganini's patience with him was unwearied.'

The little hero of this incident was the fruit of Paganini's *liaison* with the cantatrice Antonio Bianchi, of Como. Of this lady Paganini himself tells us that, after many years of a most devoted life, her temper became so violent that a separation was necessary. 'Antonio,' he says, 'was constantly tormented by the most fearful jealousy; one day she happened to be behind my chair when I was writing some lines in the album of a great pianiste, and when she read the few amiable words I had composed in honour of the artiste to whom the book belonged, she tore it from my hands, demolished it on the spot, and so fearful was her rage that she would have assassinated me.' To this termagant Paganini left an annuity of 60*l.*; and yet he has been charged with a lack of generosity! There are other affairs of the heart that might be told of besides that of Antonio. One notable epoch in his life was when, reciprocating the passion of a lady of high rank, Paganini withdrew with her to her estate in Tuscany. The lady played the guitar, and, enamoured of everything about his divinity, the King of the Violin gave up his own instrument in favour of the lady's, upon which he soon became an extraordinary player. This was, however, in the adolescent period, when love generally cools as quickly in the castle as it does in the cottage. The only tangible result of the little episode was a series of sonatas for the unusual combination of violin and guitar, some of which have been preserved.

It need hardly be said that Paganini was not a deeply religious man. Nominally he was a Roman Catholic, but he died refusing the last sacraments of the Church, and, as a consequence, his corpse lay for five years practically unburied. The circumstances of the case were peculiar. It seems that, a week before his death, the Bishop of Nice sent a priest to administer the usual rites, but Paganini, not believing that his end was so near, would not receive them. The Bishop accordingly refused him burial in consecrated ground, and, pending some arrangement, the coffin lay for a long time in the hospital at Nice. The body was afterwards removed to Villa Franca, near Genoa, but still it was not to rest. Reports got abroad that piteous cries were heard at night, and the young Baron Paganini at last, by making a direct appeal to the Pope, obtained leave to bury his father's remains—five years after the decease!—in the village church near Villa Gaiona. Strange irony of fate! He who had been decorated with honours by the Pope himself was in the end refused by that same Pope the rites of Christian burial!

THE WHITE COMPANY.

BY A. CONAN DOYLE,
AUTHOR OF 'MICAH CLARKE.'

CHAPTER XVIII.

HOW SIR NIGEL LORING PUT A PATCH UPON HIS EYE.

It was on the morning of Friday, the eight-and-twentieth day of November, two days before the feast of St. Andrew, that the cog and her two prisoners, after a weary tacking up the Gironde and the Garonne, dropped anchor at last in front of the noble city of Bordeaux. With wonder and admiration, Alleyne, leaning over the bulwarks, gazed at the forest of masts, the swarm of boats darting hither and thither on the bosom of the broad curving stream, and the grey crescent-shaped city which stretched with many a tower and minaret along the western shore. Never had he in his quiet life seen so great a town, nor was there in the whole of England, save London alone, one which might match it in size or in wealth. Here came the merchandise of all the fair countries which are watered by the Garonne and the Dordogne—the cloths of the south, the skins of Guienne, the wines of the Médoc—to be borne away to Hull, Exeter, Dartmouth, Bristol or Chester, in exchange for the wools and woolfels of England. Here too dwelt those famous smelters and welders who had made the Bordeaux steel the most trusty upon earth, and could give a temper to lance or to sword which might mean dear life to its owner. Alleyne could see the smoke of their forges reeking up in the clear morning air. The storm had died down now to a gentle breeze, which wafted to his ears the long-drawn stirring bugle-calls which sounded from the ancient ramparts.

'Holà, mon petit!' said Aylward, coming up to where he stood. 'Thou art a squire now, and like enough to win the golden spurs, while I am still the master-bowman, and master-bowman I shall bide. I dare scarce wag my tongue so freely with you as when we tramped together past Wilverley Chase, else I might be your guide now, for indeed I know every house in Bordeaux as a friar knows the beads on his rosary.'

'Nay, Aylward,' said Alleyne, laying his hand upon the sleeve of his companion's frayed jerkin, 'you cannot think me so thrall as to throw aside an old friend because I have had some small share of good fortune. I take it unkind that you should have thought such evil of me.'

'Nay, mon gar. 'Twas but a flight shot to see if the wind blew steady, though I were a rogue to doubt it.'

'Why, had I not met you, Aylward, at the Lyndhurst inn, who can say where I had now been! Certes, I had not gone to Twynham Castle, nor become squire to Sir Nigel, nor met——' He paused abruptly and flushed to his hair, but the bowman was too busy with his own thoughts to notice his young companion's embarrassment.

'It was a good hostel, that of the "Pied Merlin,"' remarked Aylward. 'By my ten finger bones! when I hang bow on nail and change my brigandine for a tunic, I might do worse than take over the dame and her business.'

'I thought,' said Alleyne, 'that you were betrothed to some one at Christchurch.'

'To three,' Aylward answered moodily, 'to three. I fear I may not go back to Christchurch. I might chance to see hotter service in Hampshire than I have ever done in Gascony. But mark you now yonder lofty turret in the centre, which stands back from the river and hath a broad banner upon the summit. See the rising sun flashes full upon it and sparkles on the golden lions. 'Tis the royal banner of England, crossed by the prince's label. There he dwells in the Abbey of St. Andrew, where he hath kept his court these years back. Beside it is the minster of the same saint, who hath the town under his very special care.'

'And how of yon grey turret on the left?'

''Tis the fane of St. Michael, as that upon the right is of St. Remi. There, too, above the poop of yonder nief, you see the towers of Saint Croix and of Pey Berland. Mark also the mighty ramparts which are pierced by the three water-gates, and sixteen others to the landward side.'

'And how is it, good Aylward, that there comes so much music from the town? I seem to hear a hundred trumpets, all calling in chorus.'

'It would be strange else, seeing that all the great lords of England and of Gascony are within the walls, and each would have his trumpeter blow as loud as his neighbour, lest it might be

thought that his dignity had been abated. Ma foi! they make as much louster as a Scotch army, where every man fills himself with girdle-cakes, and sits up all night to blow upon the toodle-pipe. See all along the banks how the pages water the horses, and there beyond the town how they gallop them over the plain! For every horse you see a belted knight hath herbergage in the town, for, as I learn, the men-at-arms and archers have already gone forward to Dax.'

'I trust, Aylward,' said Sir Nigel, coming upon deck, 'that the men are ready for the land. Go tell them that the boats will be for them within the hour.'

The archer raised his hand in salute, and hastened forward. In the mean time Sir Oliver had followed his brother knight, and the two paced the poop together, Sir Nigel in his plum-coloured velvet suit with flat cap of the same, adorned in front with the Lady Loring's glove and girt round with a curling ostrich feather. The lusty knight, on the other hand, was clad in the very latest mode, with côte-hardie, doublet, pourpoint, court-pie, and paltock of olive-green, picked out with pink and jagged at the edges. A red chaperon or cap, with long hanging cornette, sat daintily on the back of his black-curled head, while his gold-hued shoes were twisted up *à la poulaine*, as though the toes were shooting forth a tendril which might hope in time to entwine itself around his massive leg.

'Once more, Sir Oliver,' said Sir Nigel, looking shorewards with sparkling eyes, 'do we find ourselves at the gate of honour, the door which hath so often led us to all that is knightly and worthy. There flies the prince's banner, and it would be well that we haste ashore and pay our obeisance to him. The boats already swarm from the bank.'

'There is a goodly hostel near the west gate, which is famed for the stewing of spiced pullets,' remarked Sir Oliver. 'We might take the edge of our hunger off ere we seek the prince, for though his tables are gay with damask and silver he is no trencherman himself, and hath no sympathy for those who are his betters.'

'His betters!'

'His betters before the tranchoir, lad. Sniff not treason where none is meant. I have seen him smile in his quiet way because I had looked for the fourth time towards the carving squire. And indeed to watch him dallying with a little gobbet of bread, or sip-

ping his cup of thrice-watered wine, is enough to make a man feel shame at his own hunger. Yet war and glory, my good friend, though well enough in their way, will not serve to tighten such a belt as clasps my waist.'

'How read you that coat which hangs over yonder galley, Alleyne?' asked Sir Nigel.

'Argent, a bend vert between cotises dancetté gules.'

'It is a northern coat. I have seen it in the train of the Percies. From the shields, there is not one of these vessels which hath not knight or baron aboard. I would mine eyes were better. How read you this upon the left?'

'Argent and azure, a barry wavy of six.'

'Ha, it is the sign of the Wiltshire Stourtons! And there beyond I see the red and silver of the Worsleys of Apuldercombe, who like myself are of Hampshire lineage. Close behind us is the moline cross of the gallant William Molyneux, and beside it the bloody chevrons of the Norfolk Woodhouses, with the annulets of the Musgraves of Westmoreland. By St. Paul! it would be a very strange thing if so noble a company were to gather without some notable deed of arms arising from it. And here is our boat, Sir Oliver, so it seems best to me that we should go to the abbey with our squires, leaving Master Hawtayne to have his own way in the unloading.'

The horses both of knights and squires were speedily lowered into a broad lighter, and reached the shore almost as soon as their masters. Sir Nigel bent his knee devoutly as he put foot on land, and taking a small black patch from his bosom he bound it tightly over his left eye.

'May the blessed George and the memory of my sweet lady-love raise high my heart!' quoth he. 'And as a token I vow that I will not take this patch from mine eye until I have seen something of this country of Spain, and done such a small deed as it lies in me to do. And this I swear upon the cross of my sword and upon the glove of my lady.'

'In truth, you take me back twenty years, Nigel,' quoth Sir Oliver, as they mounted and rode slowly through the water-gate. 'After Cadsand, I deem that the French thought that we were an army of the blind, for there was scarce a man who had not closed an eye for the greater love and honour of his lady. Yet it goes hard with you that you should darken one side, when with both open you can scarce tell a horse from a mule. In

truth, friend, I think that you step over the line of reason in this matter.'

'Sir Oliver Buttesthorn,' said the little knight shortly, 'I would have you to understand that, blind as I am, I can yet see the path of honour very clearly, and that that is a road upon which I do not crave another man's guidance.'

'By my soul,' said Sir Oliver, 'you are as tart as verjuice this morning! If you are bent upon a quarrel with me I must leave you to your humour and drop into the "Tête d'Or" here, for I marked a varlet pass the door who bare a smoking dish, which had, methought, a most excellent smell.'

'Nenny, nenny,' cried his comrade, laying his hand upon his knee; 'we have known each other over long to fall out, Oliver, like two raw pages at their first épreuves. You must come with me first to the prince, and then back to the hostel; though sure I am that it would grieve his heart that any gentle cavalier should turn from his board to a common tavern. But is not that my Lord Delewar who waves to us? Ha! my fair lord, God and Our Lady be with you! And there is Sir Robert Cheney. Good morrow, Robert! I am right glad to see you.'

The two knights walked their horses abreast, while Alleyne and Ford, with John Northbury, who was squire to Sir Oliver, kept some paces behind them, a spear's length in front of Black Simon and of the Winchester guidon-bearer. Northbury, a lean silent man, had been to those parts before, and sat his horse with a rigid neck; but the two young squires gazed eagerly to right or left, and plucked each other's sleeves to call attention to the many strange things on every side of them.

'See to the brave stalls!' cried Alleyne. 'See to the noble armour set forth, and the costly taffeta—and oh, Ford, see to where the scrivener sits with the pigments and the ink-horns, and the rolls of sheepskin as white as the Beaulieu napery! Saw man ever the like before?'

'Nay, man, there are finer stalls in Cheapside,' answered Ford, whose father had taken him to London on occasion of one of the Smithfield joustings. 'I have seen a silversmith's booth there which would serve to buy either side of this street. But mark these houses, Alleyne, how they thrust forth upon the top. And see to the coats-of-arms at every window, and banner or pensel on the roof.'

'And the churches!' cried Alleyne. 'The Priory at Christ-

church was a noble pile, but it was cold and bare, methinks, by one of these, with their frettings, and their carvings, and their traceries, as though some great ivy-plant of stone had curled and wantoned over the walls.'

'And hark to the speech of the folk!' said Ford. 'Was ever such a hissing and clacking? I wonder that they have not wit to learn English now that they have come under the English crown. By Richard of Hampole! there are fair faces amongst them. See the wench with the brown wimple! Out on you, Alleyne, that you would rather gaze upon dead stone than on living flesh!'

It was little wonder that the richness and ornament, not only of church and of stall, but of every private house as well, should have impressed itself upon the young squires. The town was now at the height of its fortunes. Besides its trade and its armourers, other causes had combined to pour wealth into it. War, which had wrought evil upon so many fair cities around, had brought nought but good to this one. As her French sisters decayed she increased, for here, from north, and from east, and from south, came the plunder to be sold and the ransom money to be spent. Through all her sixteen landward gates there had set for many years a double tide of empty-handed soldiers hurrying Francewards, and of enriched and laden bands who brought their spoils home. The prince's court, too, with its swarm of noble barons and wealthy knights, many of whom, in imitation of their master, had brought their ladies and their children from England, all helped to swell the coffers of the burghers. Now, with this fresh influx of noblemen and cavaliers, food and lodgings were scarce to be had, and the Prince was hurrying forward his forces to Dax in Gascony to relieve the overcrowding of his capital.

In front of the minster and abbey of St. Andrew's was a large square crowded with priests, soldiers, women, friars, and burghers, who made it their common centre for sight-seeing and gossip. Amid the knots of noisy and gesticulating townsfolk, many small parties of mounted knights and squires threaded their way towards the prince's quarters, where the huge iron-clamped doors were thrown back to show that he held audience within. Two score archers stood about the gateway, and beat back from time to time with their bow-staves the inquisitive and chattering crowd who swarmed round the portal. Two knights in full armour, with lances raised

and closed vizors, sat their horses on either side, while in the centre, with two pages to tend upon him, there stood a noble-faced man in flowing purple gown, who pricked off upon a sheet of parchment the style and title of each applicant, marshalling them in their due order, and giving to each the place and facility which his rank demanded. His long white beard and searching eyes imparted to him an air of masterful dignity, which was increased by his tabard-like vesture and the heraldic barret cap with triple plume which bespoke his office.

'It is Sir William de Pakington, the prince's own herald and scrivener,' whispered Sir Nigel as they pulled up amid the line of knights who awaited admission. 'Ill fares it with the man who would venture to deceive him. He hath by rote the name of every knight of France or of England, and all the tree of his family, with his kinships, coat-armour, marriages, augmentations, abatements, and I know not what beside. We may leave our horses here with the varlets, and push forward with our squires.'

Following Sir Nigel's counsel, they pressed on upon foot until they were close to the prince's secretary, who was in high debate with a young and foppish knight, who was bent upon making his way past him.

'Mackworth!' said the king-at-arms. 'It is in my mind, young sir, that you have not been presented before.'

'Nay, it is but a day since I set foot in Bordeaux, but I feared lest the prince should think it strange that I had not waited upon him.'

'The prince hath other things to think upon,' quoth Sir William de Pakington; 'but if you be a Mackworth you must be a Mackworth of Normanton, and indeed I see now that your coat is sable and ermine.'

'I am a Mackworth of Normanton,' the other answered, with some uneasiness of manner.

'Then must you be Sir Stephen Mackworth, for I learn that when old Sir Guy died he came in for the arms and the name, the war-cry and the profit.'

'Sir Stephen is my elder brother, and I am Arthur, the second son,' said the youth.

'In sooth and in sooth!' cried the king-at-arms with scornful eyes. 'And pray, sir second son, where is the cadency mark which should mark your rank? Dare you to wear your brother's

coat without the crescent which should stamp you as his cadet? Away to your lodgings, and come not nigh the prince until the armourer hath placed the true charge upon your shield.' As the youth withdrew in confusion, Sir William's keen eye singled out the five red roses from amid the overlapping shields and cloud of pennons which faced him.

'Ha!' he cried, 'there are charges here which are above counterfeit. The roses of Loring and the boar's head of Buttesthorn may stand back in peace, but, by my faith! they are not to be held back in war. Welcome, Sir Oliver, Sir Nigel! Chandos will be glad to his very heart-roots when he sees you. This way, my fair sirs. Your squires are doubtless worthy the fame of their masters. Down this passage, Sir Oliver! Edricson! Ha! one of the old strain of Hampshire Edricsons, I doubt not. And Ford, they are of a south Saxon stock, and of good repute. There are Northburys in Cheshire and in Wiltshire, and also, as I have heard, upon the borders. So, my fair sirs, and I shall see that you are shortly admitted.'

He had finished his professional commentary by flinging open a folding-door, and ushering the party into a broad hall, which was filled with a great number of people who were waiting, like themselves, for an audience. The room was very spacious, lighted on one side by three arched and mullioned windows, while opposite was a huge fireplace in which a pile of faggots was blazing merrily. Many of the company had crowded round the flames, for the weather was bitterly cold; but the two knights seated themselves upon a bancal, with their squires standing behind them. Looking down the room, Alleyne marked that both floor and ceiling were of the richest oak, the latter spanned by twelve arching beams, which were adorned at either end by the lilies and the lions of the royal arms. On the further side was a small door, on each side of which stood men-at-arms. From time to time an elderly man in black with rounded shoulders and a long white wand in his hand came softly forth from this inner room, and beckoned to one or other of the company, who doffed cap and followed him.

The two knights were deep in talk, when Alleyne became aware of a remarkable individual who was walking round the room in their direction. As he passed each knot of cavaliers every head turned to look after him, and it was evident, from the bows and respectful salutations on all sides, that the interest which he excited

was not due merely to his strange personal appearance. He was tall and as straight as a lance, though of a great age, for his hair, which curled from under his black velvet cap of maintenance, was as white as the new-fallen snow. Yet, from the swing of his stride and spring of his step, it was clear that he had not yet lost the fire and activity of his youth. His fierce hawk-like face was clean shaven like that of a priest, save for a long thin wisp of white moustache which drooped down halfway to his shoulder. That he had been handsome might be easily judged from his high aquiline nose and clear-cut chin; but his features had been so distorted by the seams and scars of old wounds, and by the loss of one eye which had been torn from the socket, that there was little left to remind one of the dashing young knight who had been fifty years ago the fairest as well as the boldest of the English chivalry. Yet what knight was there in that hall of St. Andrew's who would not have gladly laid down youth, beauty, and all that he possessed to win the fame of this man? For who could be named with Chandos, the stainless knight, the wise councillor, the valiant warrior, the hero of Crécy, of Winchelsea, of Poictiers, of Auray, and of as many other battles as there were years to his life?

'Ha, my little heart of gold!' he cried, darting forward suddenly and throwing his arms round Sir Nigel. 'I heard that you were here, and have been seeking you.'

'My fair and dear lord,' said the knight, returning the warrior's embrace, 'I have indeed come back to you, for where else shall I go that I may learn to be a gentle and a hardy knight?'

'By my troth,' said Chandos with a smile, 'it is very fitting that we should be companions, Nigel, for since you have tied up one of your eyes, and I have had the mischance to lose one of mine, we have but a pair between us. Ah, Sir Oliver! you were on the blind side of me and I saw you not. A wise woman hath made prophecy that this blind side will one day be the death of me. We shall go in to the prince anon; but in truth he hath much upon his hands, for what with Pedro, and the King of Majorca, and the King of Navarre, who is no two days of the same mind, and the Gascon barons who are all chaffering for terms like so many hucksters, he hath an uneasy part to play. But how left you the Lady Loring?'

'She was well, my fair lord, and sent her service and greetings to you.'

'I am ever her knight and slave. And your journey, I trust that it was pleasant?'

'As heart could wish. We had sight of two rover galleys, and even came to have some slight bickering with them.'

'Ever in luck's way, Nigel!' quoth Sir John. 'We must hear the tale anon. But I deem it best that ye should leave your squires and come with me, for, howsoe'er pressed the prince may be, I am very sure that he would be loth to keep two old comrades-in-arms upon the further side of the door. Follow close behind me, and I will forestall old Sir William, though I can scarce promise to roll forth your style and rank as is his wont.' So saying, he led the way to the inner chamber, the two companions treading close at his heels, and nodding to right and left as they caught sight of familiar faces among the crowd.

CHAPTER XIX.

HOW THERE WAS STIR AT THE ABBEY OF ST. ANDREW'S.

The prince's reception-room, although of no great size, was fitted up with all the state and luxury which the fame and power of its owner demanded. A high daïs at the further end was roofed in by a broad canopy of scarlet velvet spangled with silver fleurs-de-lis, and supported at either corner by silver rods. This was approached by four steps carpeted with the same material, while all round were scattered rich cushions, Oriental mats and costly rugs of fur. The choicest tapestries which the looms of Arras could furnish draped the walls, whereon the battles of Judas Maccabæus were set forth, with the Jewish warriors in plate of proof, with crest and lance and banderole, as the naïve artists of the day were wont to depict them. A few rich settles and bancals, choicely carved and decorated with glazed leather hangings of the sort termed *or basané*, completed the furniture of the apartment, save that at one side of the daïs there stood a lofty perch, upon which a cast of three solemn Prussian gerfalcons sat, hooded and jesseled, as silent and motionless as the royal fowler who stood beside them.

In the centre of the daïs were two very high chairs with dorserets, which arched forwards over the heads of the occupants, the whole covered with light blue silk thickly powdered with golden

stars. On that to the right sat a very tall and well-formed man with red hair, a livid face, and a cold blue eye, which had in it something peculiarly sinister and menacing. He lounged back in a careless position, and yawned repeatedly as though heartily weary of the proceedings, stooping from time to time to fondle a shaggy Spanish greyhound which lay stretched at his feet. On the other throne there was perched bolt upright, with prim demeanour, as though he felt himself to be upon his good behaviour, a little round, pippin-faced person, who smiled and bobbed to every one whose eye he chanced to meet. Between and a little in front of them, on a humble charette or stool, sat a slim, dark young man, whose quiet attire and modest manner would scarce proclaim him to be the most noted prince in Europe. A jupon of dark blue cloth, tagged with buckles and pendants of gold, seemed but a sombre and plain attire amidst the wealth of silk and ermine and gilt tissue of fustian with which he was surrounded. He sat with his two hands clasped round his knee, his head slightly bent, and an expression of impatience and of trouble upon his clear well-chiselled features. Behind the thrones there stood two men in purple gowns, with ascetic, clean-shaven faces, and half a dozen other high dignitaries and office-holders of Aquitaine. Below on either side of the steps were forty or fifty barons, knights, and courtiers, ranged in a triple row to the right and the left, with a clear passage in the centre.

'There sits the prince,' whispered Sir John Chandos as they entered. 'He on the right is Pedro, whom we are about to put upon the Spanish throne. The other is Don James, whom we purpose with the aid of God to help to his throne in Majorca. Now follow me, and take it not to heart if he be a little short in his speech, for indeed his mind is full of many very weighty concerns.'

The prince, however, had already observed their entrance, and, springing to his feet, he had advanced with a winning smile and the light of welcome in his eyes.

'We do not need your good offices as herald here, Sir John,' said he in a low but clear voice; 'these valiant knights are very well known to me. Welcome to Aquitaine, Sir Nigel Loring and Sir Oliver Buttesthorn. Nay, keep your knee for my sweet father at Windsor. I would have your hands, my friends. We are like to give you some work to do ere you see the downs of Hampshire once more. Know you aught of Spain, Sir Oliver?'

'Nought, my sire, save that I have heard men say that there is a dish named an olla which is prepared there, though I have never been clear in my mind as to whether it was but a ragoût such as is to be found in the south, or whether there is some seasoning such as fennel or garlic which is peculiar to Spain.'

'Your doubts, Sir Oliver, shall soon be resolved,' answered the prince, laughing heartily, as did many of the barons who surrounded them. 'His majesty here will doubtless order that you have this dish hotly seasoned when we are all safely in Castile.'

'I will have a hotly seasoned dish for some folk I know of,' answered Don Pedro with a cold smile.

'But my friend Sir Oliver can fight right hardily without either bite or sup,' remarked the prince. 'Did I not see him at Poictiers, when for two days we had not more than a crust of bread and a cup of foul water, yet carrying himself most valiantly? With my own eyes I saw him in the rout sweep the head from a knight of Picardy with one blow of his sword.'

'The rogue got between me and the nearest French victual-wain,' muttered Sir Oliver, amid a fresh titter from those who were near enough to catch his words.

'How many have you in your train?' asked the prince, assuming a graver mien.

'I have forty men-at-arms, sire,' said Sir Oliver.

'And I have one hundred archers and a score of lancers, but there are two hundred men who wait for me on this side of the water upon the borders of Navarre.'

'And who are they, Sir Nigel?'

'They are a free company, sire, and they are called the White Company.'

To the astonishment of the knight, his words provoked a burst of merriment from the barons round, in which the two kings and the prince were fain to join. Sir Nigel blinked mildly from one to the other, until at last perceiving a stout black-bearded knight at his elbow, whose laugh rang somewhat louder than the others, he touched him lightly upon the sleeve.

'Perchance, my fair sir,' he whispered, 'there is some small vow of which I may relieve you. Might we not have some honourable debate upon the matter? Your gentle courtesy may perhaps grant me an exchange of thrusts.'

'Nay, nay, Sir Nigel,' cried the prince, 'fasten not the offence upon Sir Robert Briquet, for we are one and all bogged in the

same mire. Truth to say, our ears have just been vexed by the doings of the same company, and I have even now made vow to hang the man who held the rank of captain over it. I little thought to find him among the bravest of my own chosen chieftains. But the vow is now nought, for, as you have never seen your company, it would be a fool's act to blame you for their doings.'

'My liege,' said Sir Nigel, 'it is a very small matter that I should be hanged, albeit the manner of death is somewhat more ignoble than I had hoped for. On the other hand, it would be a very grievous thing that you, the Prince of England and the flower of knighthood, should make a vow, whether in ignorance or no, and fail to bring it to fulfilment.'

'Vex not your mind on that,' the prince answered smiling. 'We have had a citizen from Montauban here this very day, who told us such a tale of sack and murder and pillage that it moved our blood; but our wrath was turned upon the man who was in authority over them, and not on him who had never set eyes upon them.'

'My dear and honoured master,' cried Nigel, in great anxiety, 'I fear me much that in your gentleness of heart you are straining this vow which you have taken. If there be so much as a shadow of a doubt as to the form of it, it were a thousand times best——'

'Peace! peace!' cried the prince impatiently. 'I am very well able to look to my own vows and their performance. We hope to see you both in the banquet-hall anon. Meanwhile you will attend upon us with our train.' He bowed, and Chandos, plucking Sir Oliver by the sleeve, led them both away to the back of the press of courtiers.

'Why, little coz,' he whispered, 'you are very eager to have your neck in a noose. By my soul! had you asked as much from our new ally Don Pedro, he had not baulked you. Between friends, there is overmuch of the hangman in him, and too little of the prince. But indeed this White Company is a rough band, and may take some handling ere you find yourself safe in your captaincy.'

'I doubt not, with the help of St. Paul, that I shall bring them to some order,' Sir Nigel answered. 'But there are many faces here which are new to me, though others have been before me since first I waited upon my dear master, Sir Walter. I pray

you to tell me, Sir John, who are these priests upon the daïs?'

'The one is the Archbishop of Bordeaux, Nigel, and the other the Bishop of Agen.'

'And the dark knight with grey-streaked beard? By my troth, he seems to be a man of much wisdom and valour.'

'He is Sir William Felton, who, with my unworthy self, is the chief counsellor of the prince, he being high steward and I the seneschal of Aquitaine.'

'And the knights upon the right, beside Don Pedro?'

'They are cavaliers of Spain who have followed him in his exile. The one at his elbow is Fernando de Castro, who is as brave and true a man as heart could wish. In front to the right are the Gascon lords. You may well tell them by their clouded brows, for there hath been some ill will of late betwixt the prince and them. The tall and burly man is the Captal de Buch, whom I doubt not that you know, for a braver knight never laid lance in rest. That heavy-faced cavalier who plucks his skirts and whispers in his ear is Lord Oliver de Clisson, known also as the butcher. He it is who stirs up strife, and for ever blows the dying embers into flame. The man with the mole upon his cheek is the Lord Pommers, and his two brothers stand behind him, with the Lord Lesparre, Lord de Rosem, Lord de Mucident, Sir Perducas d'Albret, the Souldich de la Trane, and others. Further back are knights from Quercy, Limousin, Saintonge, Poitou, and Aquitaine, with the valiant Sir Guiscard d'Angle. That is he in the rose-coloured doublet with the ermine.'

'And the knights upon this side?'

'They are all Englishmen, some of the household and others who, like yourself, are captains of companies. There is Lord Neville, Sir Stephen Cossington, and Sir Mathew Gourney, with Sir Walter Huet, Sir Thomas Banaster, and Sir Thomas Felton, who is the brother of the high steward. Mark well the man with the high nose and flaxen beard who hath placed his hand upon the shoulder of the dark hard-faced cavalier in the rust-stained jupon.'

'Ay, by St. Paul!' observed Sir Nigel, 'they both bear the print of their armour upon their côtes-hardies. Methinks they are men who breathe freer in a camp than a court.'

'There are many of us who do that, Nigel,' said Chandos, 'and the head of the court is, I dare warrant, among them. But

of these two men the one is Sir Hugh Calverley, and the other is Sir Robert Knolles.'

Sir Nigel and Sir Oliver craned their necks to have the clearer view of these famous warriors, the one a chosen leader of free companies, the other a man who by his fierce valour and energy had raised himself from the lowest ranks until he was second only to Chandos himself in the esteem of the army.

'He hath no light hand in war, hath Sir Robert,' said Chandos. 'If he passes through a country you may tell it for some years to come. I have heard that in the north it is still the use to call a house which hath but the two gable-ends left, without walls or roof, a Knolles' mitre.'

'I have often heard of him,' said Nigel, 'and I have hoped to be so far honoured as to run a course with him. But hark, Sir John, what is amiss with the prince?'

Whilst Chandos had been conversing with the two knights a continuous stream of suitors had been ushered in, adventurers seeking to sell their swords and merchants clamouring over some grievance, a ship detained for the carriage of troops, or a tun of sweet wine which had the bottom knocked out by a troop of thirsty archers. A few words from the prince disposed of each case, and if the applicant liked not the judgment, a quick glance from the prince's dark eyes sent him to the door with the grievance all gone out of him. The young ruler had sat listlessly upon his stool with the two puppet monarchs enthroned behind him, but of a sudden a dark shadow passed over his face, and he sprang to his feet in one of those gusts of passion which were the single blot upon his noble and generous character.

'How now, Don Martin de la Carra?' he cried. 'How now, sirrah? What message do you bring to us from our brother of Navarre?'

The new-comer to whom this abrupt query had been addressed was a tall and exceedingly handsome cavalier who had just been ushered into the apartment. His swarthy cheek and raven black hair spoke of the fiery south, and he wore his long black cloak swathed across his chest and over his shoulders in a graceful sweeping fashion, which was neither English nor French. With stately steps and many profound bows, he advanced to the foot of the daïs before replying to the prince's question.

'My powerful and illustrious master,' he began, 'Charles, King of Navarre, Earl of Evreux, Count of Champagne, who also

writeth himself Overlord of Bearn, hereby sends his love and greetings to his dear cousin Edward, the Prince of Wales, Governor of Aquitaine, Grand Commander of——'

'Tush! tush! Don Martin!' interrupted the prince, who had been beating the ground with his foot impatiently during this stately preamble. 'We already know our cousin's titles and style, and, certes, we know our own. To the point, man, and at once. Are the passes open to us, or does your master go back from his word pledged to me at Libourne no later than last Michaelmas?'

'It would ill become my gracious master, sire, to go back from promise given. He does but ask some delay and certain conditions and hostages——'

'Conditions! Hostages! Is he speaking to the Prince of England, or is it to the bourgeois provost of some half-captured town? Conditions, quotha? He may find much to mend in his own condition ere long. The passes are, then, closed to us?'

'Nay, sire——'

'They are open, then?'

'Nay, sire, if you would but——'

'Enough, enough, Don Martin,' cried the prince. 'It is a sorry sight to see so true a knight pleading in so false a cause. We know the doings of our Cousin Charles. We know that while with the right hand he takes our fifty thousand crowns for the holding of the passes open, he hath his left outstretched to Henry of Trastamare, or to the King of France, all ready to take as many more for the keeping them closed. I know our good Charles, and, by my blessed name-saint the Confessor, he shall learn that I know him. He sets his kingdom up to the best bidder, like some scullion farrier selling a glandered horse. He is——'

'My lord,' cried Don Martin, 'I cannot stand here to hear such words of my master. Did they come from other lips I should know better how to answer them.'

Don Pedro frowned and curled his lip, but the prince smiled and nodded his approbation.

'Your bearing and your words, Don Martin, are such as I should have looked for in you,' he remarked. 'You will tell the king, your master, that he hath been paid his price, and that if he holds to his promise he hath my word for it that no scath shall come to his people, nor to their houses or gear. If, however, we have not his leave, I shall come close at the heels of this

message without his leave, and bearing a key with me which shall open all that he may close.' He stooped and whispered to Sir Robert Knolles and Sir Hugh Calverley, who smiled as men well pleased, and hastened from the room.

'Our Cousin Charles has had experience of our friendship,' the prince continued, 'and now, by the Saints! he shall feel a touch of our displeasure. I send now a message to our Cousin Charles which his whole kingdom may read. Let him take heed lest worse befall him. Where is my Lord Chandos? Ha, Sir John, I commend this worthy knight to your care. You will see that he hath refection, and such a purse of gold as may defray his charges, for indeed it is great honour to any court to have within it so noble and gentle a cavalier. How say you, sire?' he asked, turning to the Spanish refugee, while the herald of Navarre was conducted from the chamber by the old warrior.

'It is not our custom in Spain to reward pertness in a messenger,' Don Pedro answered, patting the head of his greyhound. 'Yet we have all heard the lengths to which your royal generosity runs.'

'In sooth, yes,' cried the King of Majorca.

'Who should know it better than we,' said Don Pedro bitterly, 'since we have had to fly to you in our trouble as to the natural protector of all who are weak?'

'Nay, nay, as brothers to a brother,' cried the prince, with sparkling eyes. 'We doubt not, with the help of God, to see you very soon restored to those thrones from which you have been so traitorously thrust.'

'When that happy day comes,' said Pedro, 'then Spain shall be to you as Aquitaine, and, be your project what it may, you may ever count on every troop and every ship over which flies the banner of Castile.'

'And,' added the other, 'upon every aid which the wealth and power of Majorca can bestow.'

'Touching the hundred thousand crowns in which I stand your debtor,' continued Pedro carelessly, 'it can no doubt——'

'Not a word, sire, not a word!' cried the prince. 'It is not now when you are in grief that I would vex your mind with such base and sordid matters. I have said once and for ever that I am yours with every bow-string of my army and every florin in my coffers.'

Ah! here is indeed a mirror of chivalry,' said Don Pedro. 'I

think, Sir Fernando, since the prince's bounty is stretched so far, that we may make further use of his gracious goodness to the extent of fifty thousand crowns. Good Sir William Felton, here, will doubtless settle the matter with you.'

The stout old English counsellor looked somewhat blank at this prompt acceptance of his master's bounty.

'If it please you, sire,' he said, 'the public funds are at their lowest, seeing that I have paid twelve thousand men of the companies, and the new taxes—the hearth tax and the wine tax—not yet come in. If you could wait until the promised help from England comes——'

'Nay, nay, my sweet cousin,' cried Don Pedro. 'Had we known that your own coffers were so low, or that this sorry sum could have weighed one way or the other, we had been loth indeed——'

'Enough, sire, enough!' said the prince, flushing with vexation. 'If the public funds be, indeed, so backward, Sir William, there is still, I trust, my own private credit, which hath never been drawn upon for my own uses, but is now ready in the cause of a friend in adversity. Go, raise this money upon our own jewels, if nought else may serve, and see that it be paid over to Don Fernando.'

'In security I offer——' cried Don Pedro.

'Tush! tush!' said the prince. 'I am not a Lombard, sire. Your kingly pledge is my security, without bond or seal. But I have tidings for you, my lords and lieges, that our brother of Lancaster is on his way for our capital with four hundred lances and as many archers to aid us in our venture. When he hath come, and when our fair consort is recovered in her health, which I trust by the grace of God may be ere many weeks be past, we shall then join the army at Dax, and set our banners to the breeze once more.'

A buzz of joy at the prospect of immediate action rose up from the group of warriors. The prince smiled at the martial ardour which shone upon every face around him.

'It will hearten you to know,' he continued, 'that I have sure advices that this Henry is a very valiant leader, and that he has it in his power to make such a stand against us as promises to give us much honour and pleasure. Of his own people he hath brought together, as I learn, some fifty thousand, with twelve thousand of the French free companies, who are, as you know, very valiant

and expert men-at-arms. It is certain, also, that the brave and worthy Bertrand du Guesclin hath ridden into France to the Duke of Anjou, and purposes to take back with him great levies from Picardy and Brittany. We hold Bertrand in high esteem, for he has oft before been at great pains to furnish us with an honourable encounter. What think you of it, my worthy Captal? He took you at Cocherel, and, by my soul! you will have the chance now to pay that score.'

The Gascon warrior winced a little at the allusion, nor were his countrymen around him better pleased, for on the only occasion when they had encountered the arms of France without English aid they had met with a heavy defeat.

'There are some who say, sire,' said the burly De Clisson, 'that the score is already overpaid, for that without Gascon help Bertrand had not been taken at Auray, nor had King John been overborne at Poictiers.'

'By heaven, but this is too much!' cried an English nobleman. 'Methinks that Gascony is too small a cock to crow so lustily.'

'The smaller cock, my Lord Audley, may have the longer spur,' remarked the Captal de Buch.

'May have its comb clipped if it make over much noise,' broke in an Englishman.

'By Our Lady of Rocamadour!' cried the Lord of Mucident, 'this is more than I can abide. Sir John Charnell, you shall answer to me for those words!'

'Freely, my lord, and when you will,' returned the Englishman carelessly.

'My Lord de Clisson,' cried Lord Audley, 'you look somewhat fixedly in my direction. By God's soul! I should be right glad to go further into the matter with you.'

'And you, my Lord of Pommers,' said Sir Nigel, pushing his way to the front, 'it is in my mind that we might break a lance in gentle and honourable debate over the question.'

For a moment a dozen challenges flashed backwards and forwards at this sudden bursting of the cloud which had lowered so long between the knights of the two nations. Furious and gesticulating the Gascons, white and cold and sneering the English, while the prince with a half smile glanced from one party to the other, like a man who loved to dwell upon a fiery scene, and yet dreaded lest the mischief go so far that he might find it beyond his control.

'Friends, friends!' he cried at last, 'this quarrel must go no further. The man shall answer to me, be he Gascon or English, who carries it beyond this room. I have overmuch need for your swords that you should turn them upon each other. Sir John Charnell, Lord Audley, you do not doubt the courage of our friends of Gascony?'

'Not I, sire,' Lord Audley answered. 'I have seen them fight too often not to know that they are very hardy and valiant gentlemen.'

'And so say I,' quoth the other Englishman; 'but, certes, there is no fear of our forgetting it while they have a tongue in their heads.'

'Nay, Sir John,' said the prince, reprovingly, 'all peoples have their own use and customs. There are some who might call us cold and dull and silent. But you hear, my lords of Gascony, that these gentlemen had no thought to throw a slur upon your honour or your valour, so let all anger fade from your mind. Clisson, Captal, De Pommers, I have your word?'

'We are your subjects, sire,' said the Gascon barons, though with no very good grace. 'Your words are our law.'

'Then shall we bury all cause of unkindness in a flagon of Malvoisie,' said the prince, cheerily. 'Ho, there! the doors of the banquet-hall! I have been overlong from my sweet spouse, but I shall be back with you anon. Let the sewers serve and the minstrels play, while we drain a cup to the brave days that are before us in the south!' He turned away, accompanied by the two monarchs, while the rest of the company, with many a compressed lip and menacing eye, filed slowly through the side-door to the great chamber in which the royal tables were set forth.

CHAPTER XX.

HOW ALLEYNE WON HIS PLACE IN AN HONOURABLE GUILD.

WHILST the prince's council was sitting, Alleyne and Ford had remained in the outer hall, where they were soon surrounded by a noisy group of young Englishmen of their own rank, all eager to hear the latest news from England.

'How is it with the old man at Windsor?' asked one.

'And how with the good Queen Philippa?'

'And how with Dame Alice Perrers?' cried a third.

'The devil take your tongue, Wat!' shouted a tall young man, seizing the last speaker by the collar and giving him an admonitory shake. 'The prince would take your head off for those words.'

'By God's coif! Wat would miss it but little,' said another. 'It is as empty as a beggar's wallet.'

'As empty as an English squire, coz,' cried the first speaker. 'What a devil has become of the maître-des-tables and his sewers? They have not put forth the trestles yet.'

'Mon Dieu! if a man could eat himself into knighthood, Humphrey, you had been a banneret at the least,' observed another, amid a burst of laughter.

'And if you could drink yourself in, old leather-head, you had been first baron of the realm,' cried the aggrieved Humphrey. 'But how of England, my lads of Loring?'

'I take it,' said Ford, 'that it is much as it was when you were there last, save that perchance there is a little less noise there.'

'And why less noise, young Solomon?'

'Ah, that is for your wit to discover.'

'Pardieu! here is a paladin come over, with the Hampshire mud still sticking to his shoes. He means that the noise is less for our being out of the country.'

'They are very quick in these parts,' said Ford, turning to Alleyne.

'How are we to take this, sir?' asked the ruffling squire.

'You may take it as it comes,' said Ford carelessly.

'Here is pertness!' cried the other.

'Sir, I honour your truthfulness,' said Ford.

'Stint it, Humphrey,' said the tall squire, with a burst of laughter. 'You will have little credit from this gentleman, I perceive. Tongues are sharp in Hampshire, sir.'

'And swords?'

'Hum! we may prove that. In two days' time is the vêpres du tournoi, when we may see if your lance is as quick as your wit.'

'All very well, Roger Harcomb,' cried a burly, bull-necked young man, whose square shoulders and massive limbs told of exceptional personal strength. 'You pass too lightly over the matter. We are not to be so easily overcrowed. The Lord

Loring hath given his proofs; but we know nothing of his squires, save that one of them hath a railing tongue. And how of you, young sir?' bringing his heavy hand down on Alleyne's shoulder.

'And what of me, young sir?'

'Ma foi! this is my lady's page come over. Your cheek will be browner and your hand harder ere you see your mother again.'

'If my hand is not hard, it is ready.'

'Ready? Ready for what? For the hem of my lady's train?'

'Ready to chastise insolence, sir!' cried Alleyne with flashing eyes.

'Sweet little coz!' answered the burly squire. 'Such a dainty colour! Such a mellow voice! Eyes of a bashful maid, and hair like a three years' babe! Voilà!' He passed his thick fingers roughly through the youth's crisp golden curls.

'You seek to force a quarrel, sir,' said the young man, white with anger.

'And what then?'

'Why, you do it like a country boor, and not like a gentle squire. Hast been ill bred and as ill taught. I serve a master who could show you how such things should be done.'

'And how would he do it, oh pink of squires?'

'He would neither be loud nor would he be unmannerly, but rather more gentle than is his wont. He would say, "Sir, I should take it as an honour to do some small deed of arms against you, not for mine own glory or advancement, but rather for the fame of my lady and for the upholding of chivalry." Then he would draw his glove, thus, and throw it on the ground; or, if he had cause to think that he had to deal with a churl, he might throw it in his face—as I do now!'

A buzz of excitement went up from the knot of squires as Alleyne, his gentle nature turned by this causeless attack into fiery resolution, dashed his glove with all his strength into the sneering face of his antagonist. From all parts of the hall squires and pages came running, until a dense swaying crowd surrounded the disputants.

'Your life for this!' said the bully, with a face which was distorted with rage.

'If you can take it,' returned Alleyne.

'Good lad!' whispered Ford. 'Stick to it close as wax.'

'I shall see justice,' cried Norbury, Sir Oliver's silent attendant.

'You brought it upon yourself, John Tranter,' said the tall squire, who had been addressed as Roger Harcomb. 'You must ever plague the new-comers. But it were shame if this went further. The lad hath shown a proper spirit.'

'But a blow! a blow!' cried several of the older squires. 'There must be a finish to this.'

'Nay; Tranter first laid hand upon his head,' said Harcomb. 'How say you, Tranter? The matter may rest where it stands?'

'My name is known in these parts,' said Tranter, proudly. 'I can let pass what might leave a stain upon another. Let him pick up his glove and say that he has done amiss.'

'I would see him in the claws of the devil first,' whispered Ford.

'You hear, young sir?' said the peacemaker. 'Our friend will overlook the matter if you do but say that you have acted in heat and haste.'

'I cannot say that,' answered Alleyne.

'It is our custom, young sir, when new squires come amongst us from England, to test them in some such way. Bethink you that if a man have a destrier or a new lance he will ever try it in time of peace, lest in days of need it may fail him. How much more then is it proper to test those who are our comrades in arms.'

'I would draw out if it may honourably be done,' murmured Norbury in Alleyne's ear. 'The man is a noted swordsman and far above your strength.'

Edricson came, however, of that sturdy Saxon blood which is very slowly heated, but once up not easily to be cooled. The hint of danger which Norbury threw out was the one thing needed to harden his resolution.

'I came here at the back of my master,' he said, 'and I looked on every man here as an Englishman and a friend. This gentleman hath shown me a rough welcome, and if I have answered him in the same spirit he has but himself to thank. I will pick the glove up; but, certes, I shall abide what I have done unless he first crave my pardon for what he hath said and done.'

Tranter shrugged his shoulders. 'You have done what you could to save him, Harcomb,' said he. 'We had best settle at once.'

'So say I,' cried Alleyne.

'The council will not break up until the banquet,' remarked a grey-haired squire. 'You have a clear two hours.'

'And the place?'

'The tilting-yard is empty at this hour.'

'Nay; it must not be within the grounds of the court, or it may go hard with all concerned if it come to the ears of the prince.'

'But there is a quiet spot near the river,' said one youth. 'We have but to pass through the abbey grounds, along the armoury wall, past the church of St. Remi, and so down the Rue des Apôtres.'

'En avant, then!' cried Tranter shortly, and the whole assembly flocked out into the open air, save only those whom the special orders of their masters held to their posts. These unfortunates crowded to the small casements, and craned their necks after the throng as far as they could catch a glimpse of them.

Close to the bank of the Garonne there lay a little tract of green sward, with the high wall of a prior's garden upon one side and an orchard with a thick bristle of leafless apple-trees upon the other. The river ran deep and swift up to the steep bank; but there were few boats upon it, and the ships were moored far out in the centre of the stream. Here the two combatants drew their swords and threw off their doublets, for neither had any defensive armour. The duello with its stately etiquette had not yet come into vogue, but rough and sudden encounters were as common as they must ever be when hot-headed youth goes abroad with a weapon strapped to its waist. In such combats, as well as in the more formal sports of the tilting-yard, Tranter had won a name for strength and dexterity which had caused Norbury to utter his well-meant warning. On the other hand, Alleyne had used his weapons in constant exercise and practice for every day for many months, and being by nature quick of eye and prompt of hand, he might pass now as no mean swordsman. A strangely opposed pair they appeared as they approached each other: Tranter dark and stout and stiff, with hairy chest and corded arms; Alleyne a model of comeliness and grace, with his golden hair and his skin as fair as a woman's. An unequal fight it seemed to most; but there were a few, and they the most experienced, who saw something in the youth's steady grey eye and wary step which left the issue open to doubt.

'Hold, sirs, hold!' cried Norbury, ere blow had been struck. 'This gentleman hath a two-handed sword, a good foot longer than that of our friend.'

'Take mine, Alleyne!' said Ford.

'Nay, friends,' he answered, 'I understand the weight and balance of mine own. To work, sir, for our lord may need us at the abbey!'

Tranter's great sword was indeed a mighty vantage in his favour. He stood with his feet close together, his knees bent outwards, ready for a dash inwards or a spring out. The weapon he held straight up in front of him with blade erect, so that he might either bring it down with a swinging blow, or by a turn of the heavy blade he might guard his own head and body. A further protection lay in the broad and powerful guard which crossed the hilt, and which was furnished with a deep and narrow notch, in which an expert swordsman might catch his foeman's blade, and by a quick turn of his wrist might snap it across. Alleyne, on the other hand, must trust for his defence to his quick eye and active foot—for his sword, though keen as a whetstone could make it, was of a light and graceful build with a narrow sloping pommel and a tapering steel.

Tranter well knew his advantage and lost little time in putting it to use. As his opponent walked towards him he suddenly bounded forward and sent in a whistling cut which would have severed the other in twain had he not sprung lightly back from it. So close was it that the point ripped a gash in the jutting edge of his linen cyclas. Quick as a panther, Alleyne sprang in with a thrust, but Tranter, who was as active as he was strong, had already recovered himself and turned it aside with a movement of his heavy blade. Again he whizzed in a blow which made the spectators hold their breath, and again Alleyne very quickly and swiftly slipped from under it, and sent back two lightning thrusts which the other could scarce parry. So close were they to each other that Alleyne had no time to spring back from the next cut, which beat down his sword and grazed his forehead, sending the blood streaming into his eyes and down his cheeks. He sprang out beyond sword sweep, and the pair stood breathing heavily, while the crowd of young squires buzzed their applause.

'Bravely struck on both sides!' cried Roger Harcomb. 'You have both won honour from this meeting, and it would be sin and shame to let it go further.'

'You have done enough, Edricson,' said Norbury.

'You have carried yourself well,' cried several of the older squires.

'For my part, I have no wish to slay this young man,' said Tranter, wiping his heated brow.

'Does this gentleman crave my pardon for having used me despitefully?' asked Alleyne.

'Nay, not I.'

'Then stand on your guard, sir!' With a clatter and clash the two blades met once more, Alleyne pressing in so as to keep within the full sweep of the heavy blade, while Tranter as continually sprang back to have space for one of his fatal cuts. A three-parts parried blow drew blood from Alleyne's left shoulder, but at the same moment he wounded Tranter slightly upon the thigh. Next instant, however, his blade had slipped into the fatal notch, there was a sharp cracking sound with a tinkling upon the ground, and he found a splintered piece of steel fifteen inches long was all that remained to him of his weapon.

'Your life is in my hands!' cried Tranter, with a bitter smile.

'Nay, nay, he makes submission!' broke in several squires.

'Another sword!' cried Ford.

'Nay, sir,' said Harcomb, 'that is not the custom.'

'Throw down your hilt, Edricson,' cried Norbury.

'Never!' said Alleyne. 'Do you crave my pardon, sir?'

'You are mad to ask it.

'Then on guard again!' cried the young squire, and sprang in with a fire and a fury which more than made up for the shortness of his weapon. It had not escaped him that his opponent was breathing in short hoarse gasps, like a man who is dizzy with fatigue. Now was the time for the purer living and the more agile limb to show their value. Back and back gave Tranter, ever seeking time for a last cut. On and on came Alleyne, his jagged point now at his foeman's face, now at his throat, now at his chest, still stabbing and thrusting to pass the line of steel which covered him. Yet his experienced foeman knew well that such efforts could not be long sustained. Let him relax for one instant, and his death-blow had come. Relax he must! Flesh and blood could not stand the strain. Already the thrusts were less fierce, the foot less ready, although there was no abatement of the spirit in the steady grey eyes. Tranter, cunning and wary from years of fighting, knew that his chance had come. He brushed aside

the frail weapon which was opposed to him, whirled up his great blade, sprang back to get the fairer sweep—and vanished into the waters of the Garonne.

So intent had the squires, both combatants and spectators, been on the matter in hand, that all thought of the steep bank and swift still stream had gone from their minds. It was not until Tranter, giving back before the other's fiery rush, was upon the very brink, that a general cry warned him of his danger. That last spring, which he hoped would have brought the fight to a bloody end, carried him clear of the edge, and he found himself in an instant eight feet deep in the ice-cold stream. Once and twice his gasping face and clutching fingers broke up through the still green water, sweeping outwards in the swirl of the current. In vain were sword-sheaths, apple-branches and belts linked together, thrown out to him by his companions. Alleyne had dropped his shattered sword and was standing, trembling in every limb, with his rage all changed in an instant to pity. For the third time the drowning man came to the surface, his hands full of green slimy water-plants, his eyes turned in despair to the shore. Their glance fell upon Alleyne, and he could not withstand the mute appeal which he read in them. In an instant he, too, was in the Garonne, striking out with powerful strokes for his late foeman.

Yet the current was swift and strong, and, good swimmer as he was, it was no easy task which Alleyne had set himself. To clutch at Tranter and to seize him by the hair was the work of a few seconds, but to hold his head above water and to make their way out of the current was another matter. For a hundred strokes he did not seem to gain an inch. Then at last, amid a shout of joy and praise from the bank, they slowly drew clear into more stagnant water, at the instant that a rope, made of a dozen sword-belts linked together by the buckles, was thrown by Ford into their very hands. Three pulls from eager arms, and the two combatants, dripping and pale, were dragged up the bank, and lay panting upon the grass.

John Tranter was the first to come to himself, for, although he had been longer in the water, he had done nothing during that fierce battle with the current. He staggered to his feet and looked down upon his rescuer, who had raised himself upon his elbow, and was smiling faintly at the buzz of congratulation and of praise which broke from the squires around him.

'I am much beholden to you, sir,' said Tranter, though in no

very friendly voice. 'Certes, I should have been in the river now but for you, for I was born in Warwickshire, which is but a dry county, and there are few who swim in those parts.'

'I ask no thanks,' Alleyne answered shortly. 'Give me your hand to rise, Ford.'

'The river has been my enemy,' said Tranter, 'but it hath been a good friend to you, for it has saved your life this day.'

'That is as it may be,' returned Alleyne.

'But all is now well over,' quoth Harcomb, 'and no scath come of it, which is more than I had at one time hoped for. Our young friend here hath very fairly and honestly earned his right to be craftsman of the Honourable Guild of the Squires of Bordeaux. Here is your doublet, Tranter.'

'Alas for my poor sword which lies at the bottom of the Garonne!' said the squire.

'Here is your pourpoint, Edricson,' cried Norbury. 'Throw it over your shoulders, that you may have at least one dry garment.'

'And now away back to the abbey!' said several.

'One moment, sirs,' cried Alleyne, who was leaning on Ford's shoulder, with the broken sword, which he had picked up, still clutched in his right hand. 'My ears may be somewhat dulled by the water, and perchance what has been said has escaped me, but I have not yet heard this gentleman crave pardon for the insults which he put upon me in the hall.'

'What! do you still pursue the quarrel?' asked Tranter.

'And why not, sir? I am slow to take up such things, but once afoot I shall follow it while I have life or breath.'

'Ma foi! you have not too much of either, for you are as white as marble,' said Harcomb bluntly. 'Take my rede, sir, and let it drop, for you have come very well out from it.'

'Nay,' said Alleyne, 'this quarrel is none of my making; but, now that I am here, I swear to you that I shall never leave this spot until I have that which I have come for: so ask my pardon, sir, or choose another glaive and to it again.'

The young squire was deadly white from his exertions, both on the land and in the water. Soaking and stained, with a smear of blood on his white shoulder and another on his brow, there was still in his whole pose and set of face the trace of an inflexible resolution. His opponent's duller and more material mind quailed before the fire and intensity of a higher spiritual nature.

'I had not thought that you had taken it so amiss,' said he awkwardly. 'It was but such a jest as we play upon each other, and, if you must have it so, I am sorry for it.'

'Then I am sorry too,' quoth Alleyne warmly, 'and here is my hand upon it.'

'And the none-meat horn has blown three times,' quoth Harcomb, as they all streamed in chattering groups from the ground. 'I know not what the prince's maître-de-cuisine will say or think. By my troth! master Ford, your friend here is in need of a cup of wine, for he hath drunk deeply of Garonne water. I had not thought from his fair face that he had stood to this matter so shrewdly.'

'Faith,' said Ford, 'this air of Bordeaux hath turned our turtle-dove into a game-cock. A milder or more courteous youth never came out of Hampshire.'

'His master also, as I understand, is a very mild and courteous gentleman,' remarked Harcomb; 'yet I do not think that they are either of them men with whom it is very safe to trifle.'

(To be continued.)

THE

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THE NEW RECTOR.

BY THE AUTHOR OF 'THE HOUSE OF THE WOLF.'

CHAPTER VI.

THE BONAMYS AT HOME.

THE rector made his first exploration of his new neighbourhood, not on the day after his arrival, which was taken up with his induction by the archdeacon and with other matters, but on the day after that. He chose on this occasion to avoid the streets, in which he felt somewhat shy, so polite were the attentions and so curious the glances of his parishioners; and selected instead a lane which, starting from the churchyard, seemed to plunge at once into the country. It was a pleasant lane. It lay deep sunk in a cutting through the sandstone rock—a cutting first formed, perhaps, when the great stones for the building of the church were dragged up that way. He paused halfway down the slope to look curiously over the landscape, and was still standing when someone came round the corner before him. It was Kate Bonamy. He saw the girl's cheek—she was alone—flush ever so slightly as their eyes met; and he noticed, too, that to all appearance she would have passed him with a bow had he not placed himself in her way. 'Come,' he said, laughing frankly, as he held out his hand, 'you must not cut me, Miss Bonamy! Indeed, you have quite the aspect of an old friend, for until now I have not seen one face since I came here that was not absolutely new to me.'

'It must feel strange, no doubt,' she murmured.

'It does. *I* feel strange!' he replied. 'I want you to tell me

where this road goes to, if you please. I am so strange, I do not even know that.'

'It leads to Kingsford Carbonel,' she answered briefly.

'Ah! The archdeacon lives there, does he not?'

'Yes.'

'And the distance is—— ?'

'Three miles.'

'Thank you,' he said. 'Really, you are as concise as a milestone, Miss Bonamy. And now let me remind you,' he continued —there was an air of 'I am going on this moment' about her, which provoked him to detain her the longer—'that you have not yet asked me what I think of Claversham.'

'I would rather ask you in a month's time,' Kate answered quietly, holding out her hand to take leave. 'Though it is already reported in the town that your stay will not be a long one; indeed, that you will only stay a year.'

'I shall only stay a year!' the rector repeated in astonishment.

'Certainly,' she answered, smiling, and relapsing for a moment into the pleasant frankness of that day at Oxford—'only a year; your days are already numbered, it is said.'

'What do you mean?' he asked plainly.

'Have you never heard the old tradition that as many times as a clergyman sounds the bell at his induction, so many years will he remain in the living? The report in Claversham is that you rang it only once.'

'You did not hear it yourself?' he said, catching her eyes suddenly, a lurking smile in his own.

Her colour rose faintly. 'I am not sure,' she said. And then, meeting his eyes boldly, she added in a different tone, 'Yes, I did hear it.'

'Only once?'

She nodded.

'That is very sad,' he answered. 'Well, the tradition is new to me. If I had known it,' he added, laughing, 'I should have tolled the bell at least fifty times. Clode should have instructed me; but I suppose he thought I knew. I remember now that the archdeacon did say something afterwards, but I did not understand the reference. You know the archdeacon, Miss Bonamy, I suppose?'

'No,' said Kate, growing stiff again.

'Do you not? Well, at any rate you can tell me where Mrs.

Hammond lives. She has kindly asked me to dine with her on Tuesday. I put my acceptance in my pocket, and thought I would deliver it myself when I came back from my walk.'

'Mrs. Hammond lives at the Town House,' Kate answered. 'It is the large house among the trees near the top of the town. You cannot mistake it.'

'Shall I have the pleasure of meeting you there?' he asked, holding out his hand at last.

'No,' she replied, with unexpected decision, 'I do not know Mrs. Hammond, Mr. Lindo. But I am detaining you. Good afternoon.' And with that and a slight bow she left him; rather abruptly at the last.

'That is odd,' Lindo reflected as, continuing his walk, he turned to admire her graceful figure and the pretty carriage of her head. 'I fancied that in these small towns everyone knew everyone. What sort of people are the Hammonds, I wonder? New, rich, and vulgar, perhaps. It may be so, and that would account for it. Yet Clode spoke well of them.'

Something which he did not understand in the girl's manner continued to pique the young man's curiosity long after he had parted from her, and led him to dwell more intently upon her than upon the scenery, novel as this was to him. She had shown herself at one moment so frank, and at another so stiff and constrained, that it was equally impossible to ascribe the one attitude to shyness or the other to a naturally candid manner. The rector considered the question so long, and found it so puzzling—and interesting—that on his return to town he had come to one conclusion only—that it was his immediate duty to call upon his churchwardens. He had made the acquaintance of Mr. Harper, his own warden, at his induction. It remained, therefore, to call upon Mr. Bonamy, the people's warden. When he had taken his lunch, it seemed to him that there was no time like the present.

He had no difficulty in finding Mr. Bonamy's house, which stood in the middle of the town, about half-way down Bridge Street. It was a substantial, respectable residence of brick, not detached nor withdrawn from the roadway. It had nothing aristocratic in its appearance, and was known by a number. Its eleven windows, of which the three lowest rejoiced in mohair blinds, were sombre, its doorway was heavy. In a word, it was a respectable middle-class house in a dull street in a country town—a house suggestive of early dinners and set teas. The rector felt

chilled by its very appearance; but he knocked, and presently a maidservant opened the door about a foot. 'Is Mr. Bonamy at home?' he said.

'No, sir,' the girl drawled, holding the door as if she feared he might attempt to enter by force, 'he is not.'

'Ah, I am sorry I have missed him,' said the clergyman, handling his card-case. 'Do you know at what time he is likely to return?'

'No, sir, I don't,' replied the girl, who was all eyes for the strange rector, 'but I expect Miss Kate does. Will you walk upstairs, sir? and I will tell her.'

'Perhaps I had better,' he answered, pocketing his card-case after a moment's hesitation. And accordingly he walked in, and followed the servant to the drawing-room, where she poked the sinking fire and induced a sickly blaze.

Left to himself—for Kate was not there—he looked round curiously, and as he looked the sense of disappointment which he had felt at sight of the house grew upon him. It was a cold, uncomfortable room. It had a set, formal look, which was not quaintness nor harmony, and which was strange to the Londoner. It was so neat: every article in it had a place, and was in its place, and apparently never had been out of its place. There was a vase of chrysanthemums on the large centre table, but the rector thought they must be wax, they were so prim. There were other wax flowers—which he hated. He almost shivered as he looked at the four walls. He felt obliged to sit upright on his chair, and to place his hat exactly in the middle of a square of the carpet, and to ponder over the question of what the maid had done with the poker. For she had certainly not stirred the fire with the bright and shining thing which lay in evidence in the fender.

He was in the act of rising cautiously with the intention of solving this mystery, when the door opened and the elder sister came in, Daintry following her. 'My father is not in, Mr. Lindo,' Kate said, advancing to meet him, and shaking hands with him.

'No; so I learned downstairs,' he answered. 'But I——'

Kate—she had scarcely turned from him—cut him short with an exclamation of dismay. 'Oh, Daintry, you naughty girl!' she cried. 'You have brought Snorum up.'

'Well,' said Daintry with her usual simplicity—a large white dog, half bulldog, half terrier, with red-rimmed eyes and projecting teeth, had crept in at her heels—'he followed me.'

'You know papa would be so angry if he found him here.'

'But I only want him to see Mr. Lindo. You are unkind, Kate! You know he never gets a chance of seeing a stranger.'

'You want to know if he likes me?' the rector said, laughing.

'That is it,' she answered, nodding.

But Kate, though she laughed, was inexorable, and bundled the big dog out. 'Do you know, she has two more like that, Mr. Lindo?' she said apologetically.

'Snip and Snap,' Daintry explained. 'But they are not like that. They are smaller. Jack gave me Snorum, and Snip and Snap are Snorum's sons.'

'It is quite a genealogy,' the rector said, smiling.

'Yes, and Jack was the Genesis. Genesis means beginning, you know,' Daintry vouchsafed.

'Daintry, you must go downstairs if you talk nonsense,' Kate said imperatively. She was looking, the young man thought, prettier than ever in a grey and blue plaid frock and the neatest of collars and cuffs. As for Daintry, she shrugged her shoulders under the rebuke, and lolled in one of the stiff-backed chairs, her attitude that of a vine clinging to a telegraph-post.

Her wilfulness had one happy effect, however. The rector in his amusement forgot the chill formality of the room and the dull respectability of the house's exterior. For half an hour he talked on without a thought of the gentleman whom he had come to see. Some inkling of the real circumstances of the case which had entered his head before the sisters' appearance faded again, and in gazing on the pure animated faces of the two girls he quickly lost sight of the evidences of lack of taste which appeared in their surroundings. If Kate, on her side, forgot for a moment certain chilling realities, and surrendered herself to the pleasure of the moment, it must be remembered that hitherto—in Claversham, at least—her experience of men had been confined to Dr. Gregg and his fellows, and also that none of us, even the wisest and proudest, are always on guard.

Mr. Bonamy not appearing, Lindo left at last, perfectly assured that the half-hour he had just spent was the pleasantest he had yet passed in Claversham. He went out of the house in a gentle glow of enthusiasm. The picture of Kate Bonamy, trim and neat, with her hair in a bright knot, and laughter softening her eyes, remained with him, and he walked half-way down the grey street, in which the night was falling cheerlessly, his consciousness of outward objects lost in a delightful reverie.

He was aroused by the approach of a tall elderly man who had just turned the corner before him, and was advancing towards him with long, rapid strides. The stranger, who looked about sixty, wore a wide-skirted black coat and a tall silk hat, from under which the grey hairs straggled thinly, set far back on his head. His figure was spare, his face sallow, his features prominent. His mouth was peevish, his eyes sharp and saturnine. As he walked he kept one hand in his trousers-pocket, the other swung by his side. The rector looked at him a moment in doubt, and then stopped him. 'Mr. Bonamy, I am sure?' he said, holding out his hand.

'Yes, I am,' the other answered, fixing him with a penetrating glance. 'And you, sir?'

'May I introduce myself? I have just called at your house, and, unluckily, failed to find you at home. I am Mr. Lindo.'

'Oh, the new rector!' said Mr. Bonamy, putting out a cold hand, while the glitter of his eye lost none of its steeliness.

'Yes, and I am glad to have intercepted you,' Lindo continued, with a little colour in his cheek, and speaking quickly under the influence of his late enthusiasm, which as yet was proof against the lawyer's reserve. 'For I have been extremely anxious to make your acquaintance, and, indeed, to say something particular to you, Mr. Bonamy.'

The elder man bowed to hide a smile. 'As churchwarden, I presume?' he said smoothly.

'Yes, and—and generally. I am quite aware, Mr. Bonamy,' continued the rash young man in a fervour of frankness, 'that you were not disposed to look upon my appointment—the appointment of a complete stranger, I mean—with favour.'

'May I ask who told you that?' said the churchwarden abruptly.

The young clergyman coloured. 'Well, I—perhaps you will excuse me saying how I learned it,' he answered, beginning to see that he would have done better to be more reticent. For there is no mistake which youth more often makes than that of arousing sleeping dogs, and trying to explain things which a wiser man would pass over in silence. Mr. Bonamy had his own reasons for regarding the parson with suspicion, and had no mind to be addressed in the indulgent vein. Nor was he propitiated when Lindo added, 'I learned your feeling, if I may say so, by an accident.'

'Then I think you should have kept knowledge so gained to yourself!' the lawyer retorted.

The rector started and turned crimson under the reproof. His dignity was new and tender, and the other's tone was offensive in a high degree. Yet the young man tried to control himself, and for the moment succeeded. 'Possibly,' he said, with some stiffness. 'My only motive in mentioning the matter, however, was this, Mr. Bonamy, that I hope in a short time, by appealing to you for your hearty co-operation, to overcome any prejudices you may have entertained.'

'My prejudices are rather strong,' the lawyer answered grimly. 'You are quite at liberty to try, however, Mr. Lindo. But I may as well warn you of one thing now, as frankness seems to be in fashion. I have just been told that you are meditating considerable changes in our church here. Now, I must tell you this, that I object to anything new—anything new, and not only to new incumbents!' with a smile which somewhat softened his last words.

'But who informed you,' cried the young rector in indignant surprise, 'that I meditated changes, Mr. Bonamy?'

'Ah!' the lawyer answered in his driest and thinnest voice. 'That is just what I cannot tell you. Let us say that I learned it—by accident, Mr. Lindo!' And his sharp eyes twinkled.

'It is not true, however!' the rector exclaimed.

'Is it not? Well,' with a slight cough, 'I am glad to hear it!'

Mr. Bonamy made the admission, but his tone as he did so was such that it only irritated Lindo the more. 'You mean that you do not believe me!' he cried, speaking so strenuously that Clowes the bookseller, who had been watching the interview from his shop-door, was able to repeat the words to a dozen people afterwards. 'I can assure you that it is so. I am not thinking of making any changes whatever—unless you consider the mere removal of the sheep from the churchyard a change!'

'I do. A great change,' replied the churchwarden with grimness.

'But you surely do not object to it!' Lindo exclaimed in astonishment. 'Everyone must agree that in these days, and in town churchyards at any rate, the presence of sheep is unseemly.'

'I do not agree to that at all!' Mr. Bonamy answered calmly. 'Neither did Mr. Williams, the late rector, who had had long experience, act as if he were of that mind.'

The present rector threw up his hands in disgust—in disgust and wonder. Remember, he was very young. The thing seemed to him so clear that he was assured the other was arguing for the

sake of argument—a thing we all hate in other people—and he lost patience. 'I do not think you mean what you say, Mr. Bonamy,' he blurted out at last. He was much discomposed, yet he made an attempt to assume an air of severity which did not sit well upon him at the moment.

Mr. Bonamy grinned. 'That you will see when you turn out the sheep, Mr. Lindo,' he said. 'For the present I think I will bid you good evening.' And taking off his hat gravely—to the rector the gravity seemed ironical—he went his way.

Men take these things differently. To the lawyer there was nothing disturbing in such a passage of arms as this. He was never so happy—Clavershamm knew it well—as in and after a quarrel. 'Master Lindo thought to twist me round his finger, did he?' he muttered to himself as he stopped on his own door-step and thrust the key into the lock. 'He has found out his mistake now. We will have nothing new here—nothing new while John Bonamy is warden, at any rate, my lad! It is well, however,' Mr. Bonamy continued, pausing to cast a backward glance, 'that Clode gave me a hint in time. Set a beggar on horseback and he will ride—I know where!' And the lawyer went in and slammed the door behind him.

Meanwhile, what is sauce for the goose is not always sauce for the gander. The younger man turned away, at the moment, indeed, in a white heat; full of wrath at the other's unreasonableness, folly, churlishness. But the comfortable warmth which this feeling engendered passed away quickly—alas! much too quickly—and long before Lindo reached the rectory, though the walk through the streets, in which the shops were just being lighted, did not take him two minutes, a chill depression had taken its place. This was a fine beginning! This was a happy augury of his future administration of the parish! To have begun by quarrelling with his churchwarden—could anything be worse? And the check had come so suddenly, so unexpectedly, and at a time when he had been on such good terms with himself, that he felt it the more sorely. He went into the house with his head bent, and was not best pleased to find Stephen Clode inquiring after him in the hall. He would rather have been alone.

The curate did not fail to note, as he came forward, that something was amiss, and a gleam of intelligence flashed for an instant across his dark face. 'Come into the study, will you?' said the rector curtly. Since Clode was here, and could not be avoided, he

felt it would be a relief to tell him all. And he quickly did so, the curate listening and making no remark whatever, so that the rector presently looked at him in surprise. 'What do you think of it?' he said, some impatience in his tone. 'It is unfortunate, is it not?'

'Well, I don't know,' the curate answered, leaning forward in his chair, with his elbows on his knees and his eyes cast down upon the hat which he was slowly revolving between his hands. 'I am not astonished, you know. What can you expect from a pig but a grunt?'

The rector got up, and, leaning his arm on the mantelshelf, felt, if the truth be told, rather uncomfortable. 'I do not understand you,' he said at length.

'It is what I should have expected from Bonamy. That is all.'

'Then you must think him a very ill-conditioned man!' Lindo retorted, scarcely knowing whether the annoyance he felt was a reminiscence of his late conflict or caused by his companion's manner.

'Well, again, what else can you expect?' Clode replied sagely, looking up and shrugging his shoulders. 'You know all about him, I suppose?'

'I know nothing,' said the rector, frowning slightly.

'He is not a gentleman, you know,' the curate answered, still looking up and speaking with languid indolence as if what he said must be known to everyone. 'You have heard his history?'

'No, I have not.'

'He was an office-boy with Adams and Rooke, the old solicitors here—swept out the office, and brought the coal, and so forth. He had his wits about him, and old Adams gave him his articles, and finally took him into partnership. Then the old men died off, and it all came to him. He is well off, and has power of a sort in the town; but, of course,' the curate added, getting up lazily and yawning—'well, people like the Hammonds do not visit with him.'

There was silence in the room for a full minute. The rector had left the fireplace and, with his back to the speaker, was raising the lamp-wick. 'Why did you not tell me this before?' he said at length, his voice hard.

'I did not see why I should prejudice you against the man

before you saw him,' replied the curate, with much reason. 'Besides, I really was not sure whether you knew his history or not. I am afraid I did not give much thought to the matter.'

Fie, Mr. Clode, fie!

CHAPTER VII.

THE HAMMONDS' DINNER-PARTY.

However, the bloom was gone. The new top, the new book, the bride—the first joy in the possession of each one of these fades, not gradually, but at a leap, as day fades in the tropics. A chip in the wood, the turning of the last page, the first selfish word, and the thing is done; ecstasy becomes sober satisfaction. It was so with the rector. The first glamour of his good fortune, of his new toy, died abruptly with that evening—with the quarrel with his churchwarden, and the discovery of the cause of that constraint which he had remarked in Kate Bonamy's manner from the first.

He was a conscientious man, and the failure of his good resolutions, his aspirations to be the perfect parish priest, fretted him. Moreover, he had to think of the future. He soon learned that Mr. Bonamy might not be a gentleman, and was indeed reputed to be a stubborn, queer-tempered man; but he learned also that he had great influence in the town, though, except in the way of business, he associated with few, and that he, Reginald Lindo, would have to reckon with him on that footing. The certainty of this and of the bad beginning he had made naturally depressed the young man, his customary good opinion of himself not coming to his aid at once. And, besides, he carried about with him—sometimes it came between him and his book, sometimes he saw it framed by the autumn landscape—the picture of Kate's pure proud face. At such moments he felt himself humiliated by the slights cast upon her. The Hammonds did not think her fit company for them! The Hammonds!

Not that he knew the Hammonds yet, or many others, the days which intervened between his induction and the dinner at the Town House being somewhat lonely days, during which he was much thrown back upon himself, and only felt by slow degrees the soothing influence of the routine work of his position. Of his curate, and of him only, he naturally saw much, and found it small comfort to learn from the Reverend Stephen that the fracas

with Mr. Bonamy had not escaped the attention of the town, but was being made the subject of comment by many who were delighted to have so novel a subject as the new rector and his probable conduct.

He was sitting at breakfast a few days later—on the morning of the Hammonds' party—when Mrs. Baker announced an early visitor. 'No, he is not a gentleman, sir,' she said, 'though he has on a black coat. A stranger to the town, I think, but he will not say what he wants, except to see you.'

'I will come to him in the study,' her master answered.

The housekeeper, however, on going out, and taking a second glance at the caller, did not show him into the study, but, instead, gave him a seat in the hall on the farther side from the coat-stand. There the rector, when he came out, found him—a pale, fat-faced, small-eyed man, dressed neatly and decorously, though his black clothes were threadbare. He took him into the study, and asked him his business. 'But first sit down,' the rector added pleasantly, desiring to set the man at his ease.

The stranger sat down gingerly on the edge of a chair. For a moment there was a pause of seeming embarrassment, and then, 'I am body-servant, sir,' he said abruptly, passing his tongue across his lips, and looking up furtively to learn the effect of his announcement, 'to the Earl of Dynmore.'

'Indeed!' the rector replied, with a slight start. 'Has Lord Dynmore returned to England, then?'

Again the man looked up slyly. 'No, sir,' he answered with deliberation, 'I cannot say that he has, sir.'

'You have brought some letter or message from him, perhaps?' the clergyman hazarded. The stranger seemed to have a difficulty in telling his own story.

'No, sir, if you will pardon me, I have come about myself, sir,' the man explained, speaking a little more freely. 'I am in a little bit of trouble, and I think you would help me, sir, if you heard the story.'

'I am quite willing to hear the story,' said the rector gravely. Looking more closely at the man, he saw now that his neatness was only on the surface. His white cravat was creased, and his wrists displayed no linen. An air of seediness marked him, viewed in the full light of the windows, and, pale as his face was, it wore here and there a delicate flush. Perhaps the man's admission that he was in trouble helped the rector to see this.

'Well, sir, it was this way,' the servant began. 'I was not very well out there, sir, and his lordship—he is an independent kind of man—thought he would be better by himself. So he gave me my passage-money and board wages for three months, and told me to come home and take a holiday until he returned to England. So far it was all right, sir.'

'Yes?' said the rector.

'But on board the boat—I am not excusing what I did, sir; but there are others have done worse,' the man continued, with another of his sudden upward glances—'I was led to play cards with a set of sharpers, and—and the end of it was that I landed at Liverpool yesterday without a halfpenny.'

'That was bad.'

'Yes, it was, sir. I do not know that I ever felt so bad in my life,' replied the servant earnestly. 'And now you know my position, sir. There are several people in the town—but they have no means to help me—who can tell you I am his lordship's valet, and my name is Charles Felton.'

'You want help, I suppose?'

'I have not a halfpenny, sir! I want something to live on until his lordship comes back.'

His tone seemed to change as he said this, growing hard and almost defiant. The rector noted the alteration, and did not like it. 'But why come to me?' he said, more coldly than he had yet spoken. 'Why do you not go to Lord Dynmore's steward, or agent, or his solicitor, my man?'

'They would tell of me,' was the curt answer. 'And likely enough I should lose my place.'

'Still, why come to me?' Lindo persisted—chiefly to learn what was in the man's mind, for he had already determined what he would do.

'Because you are rector of Claversham, sir,' the applicant retorted at last. And he rose and confronted the parson with an unpleasant smile on his pale face—'which is in my lord's gift, as you know, sir,' he continued, in a tone rude and almost savage—a tone which considerably puzzled his companion, who was not conscious of having said anything offensive to the man. 'I came here, sir, expecting to meet an older gentleman—a gentleman of your name, a gentleman known to me—and I find you. I see you, do you see, where I expected to find him.'

'You mean my uncle, I suppose?' said Lindo.

'Well, sir, that is as may be. You know best,' was the odd reply, and the man's look was as odd as his words. 'But that is how the case stands; and, seeing it stands so, I hope you will help me, sir. I do hope, on every account, sir, that you will see your way to help me.'

The rector looked at the speaker with a slight frown, liking neither him nor his behaviour. But he had already made up his mind to help him, if only in gratitude to his patron, whose retainer he was; and this, though the earl would never know of the act, nor possibly approve of it. The man had at least had the frankness to own the folly which had brought him to these straits, and Lindo was inclined to set down the oddity of his present manner to the fear and anxiety of a respectable servant on the verge of disgrace. 'Yes,' he said coldly, after a moment's thought, 'I am willing to help you. Of course I shall expect you to repay me if and when you are able, Felton.'

'I will do that,' replied the man rather cavalierly.

'You might have added, "and thank you, sir,"' the rector said, with a keen glance of reproof. He turned, as he spoke, to a small cupboard constructed between the bookshelves near the fireplace, and, opening it, took out a cash-box.

The man coloured under his reproach, and muttered some apology, resuming, as by habit, the tone of respect which seemed natural to him. All the same he watched the clergyman's movements with great closeness, and appraised, even before it was placed in his hand, the sum which Lindo took from a compartment set apart apparently for gold. 'I will allow you ten shillings a week—on loan, of course,' Lindo said after a moment's thought. 'You can keep yourself on that, I suppose? And, besides, I will advance you a sovereign to supply yourself with anything of which you have pressing need. That should be ample. There are three half-sovereigns.'

This time the man did thank him with an appearance of heartiness, though before he had said much the study door opened, and Stephen Clode came in, his hat in his hand. 'Oh, I beg your pardon,' the curate said, taking in at a glance the open cash-box and the stranger's outstretched hand, and preparing to withdraw. 'I thought you were alone.'

'Come in, come in!' said the rector, closing the money-box hastily, and with some embarrassment, for he was not altogether sure that he had not done a foolish and quixotic thing. 'Our

friend here is going. You can send me your address, Felton. Good-day.'

The man thanked him and, taking up his hat, went. 'Some one out of luck?' said Clode.

'Yes.'

'I did not much like his looks,' the curate remarked. 'He is not a townsman, or I should know him.'

The rector felt that his discretion was assailed, and hastened to defend himself. 'He is respectable enough,' he said carelessly. 'As a fact, he is Lord Dynmore's valet.'

'But has Lord Dynmore come back?' the curate exclaimed, his hand arrested in the act of taking down a book from a high shelf, and his head turning quickly. If he expected to learn anything, however, from his superior's demeanour he was disappointed. Lindo was busy locking the cupboard, and had his back to him.

'No, he has not come back,' the rector explained, 'but he has sent the man home, and the foolish fellow lost his money on the boat coming over, and wants an advance until his master's return.'

'But why on earth does he come to you for it?' cried the curate, with undisguised astonishment.

The rector shrugged his shoulders. 'Oh, I do not know,' he said, a trifle of irritation in his manner. 'He did, and there is an end of it. Is there any news?'

Mr. Clode seemed to find a difficulty in at once changing the direction of his thoughts. But he did so with an effort, and, after a pause, answered, 'No, I think not. There is a good deal of interest felt in the question of the churchyard sheep, I fancy—whether you will take your course or comply with Mr. Bonamy's whim.'

'I do not know myself,' the young rector answered, turning and facing the curate, his feet apart and his hands thrust deep into his pockets. 'I do not, indeed. It is a serious matter.'

'It is. Still you bear the responsibility,' said the curate with diffidence, 'and, without expressing any view of my own on the subject, I confess——'

'Well?'

'I think if I bore the responsibility, I should feel called upon to do what I myself thought right in the matter.'

The younger man shook his head doubtfully. 'There is something in that,' he said; 'but, on the other hand, one cannot look on the point as an essential, and, that being so, perhaps one should

prefer peace. But there, enough of that now, Clode. I think you said you were not going to the Hammonds' this evening?'

'No, I am not.'

The rector almost wished he were not. However sociable a man may be, a few days of solitude and a little temporary depression will render him averse to society if he be in the least degree sensitive. Lindo as a man was not very sensitive; he held too good an opinion of himself. But as a rector he was, and as he walked across to the Town House to dinner he anticipated anything but enjoyment.

In a few minutes, however—has it not some time or other happened to all of us?—everything was changed with him. He felt as if he had entered another world. The air of culture and refinement which surrounded him from the hall inwards, the hearty kindness of Mrs. Hammond, the pretty rooms, the music and flowers, Laura's light laughter and pleasant badinage, all surprised and delighted him. The party might almost have been a London party, it was so lively. The archdeacon, a red-faced, cheery, white-haired man, whose acquaintance Lindo had already made, and his wife, who was a mild image of himself, were of the number, which was completed by their daughter and four or five county people, all prepared to welcome and be pleased with the new rector. Lindo, sprung from gentlefolk himself, had the ordinary experience of society; but here he found himself treated, as a stranger and a dignitary, to a degree of notice and a delicate flattery of which he had not before tasted the sweets. Perhaps he was the more struck by the taste displayed in the house, and the wit and liveliness of his new friends, because he had so little looked for them—because he had insensibly judged his parish by his experience of Mr. Bonamy, and had come expecting this house to be as his.

If, under these circumstances, the young fellow had been unaffected by the incense offered to him he would have been more than mortal. But he was not. He began, before he had been in the house an hour, to change, all unconsciously of course, his point of view. He began to wonder especially why he had been so depressed during the last few days, and why he had troubled himself so much about the opinions of people whose views no sensible man would regard.

Perhaps the girl beside him—he took Laura in to dinner—contributed as much as anything to this. It was not only that she was

bright and sparkling—nay, in the luxury of her pearls and evening dress even enchanting—nor only that the femininity which had enslaved Stephen Clode began to have its effect on her new neighbour. But Laura had a way while she talked to him, while her lustrous brown eyes dwelt momentarily on his, of removing herself and himself to a world apart—a world in which downrightness seemed more downright and rudeness an outrage. And so, while her manner gently soothed and flattered her companion, it led him almost insensibly to—well, to put it in the concrete, to think scorn of Mr. Bonamy.

'You have had a misunderstanding,' she said softly, as they stood together by the piano after dinner, a feathering plant or two fencing them off in a tiny solitude of their own, 'with Mr. Bonamy, have you not, Mr. Lindo?'

From anyone else, perhaps from her half an hour before, he would have resented mention of the matter. Now he did not seem to mind. 'Something of the kind,' he said, laughing.

'About the sheep in the churchyard, was it not?' she continued.

'Yes.'

'Well, will you pardon me saying something?' Resting both her hands on the raised lid of the piano, she looked up at him, and it must be confessed that he thought he had never seen eyes so soft and brilliant before. 'It is only this,' she said earnestly—'that I hope you will not give way to him. He is a wretched cross-grained fidgety man and full of crotchets. You know all about him, of course?' she added, a slight ring of pride in her voice.

'I know that he is my churchwarden,' said the rector, half in seriousness.

'Yes!' she replied. 'That is just what he is fit for!'

'You think so?' Lindo retorted, smiling. 'Then you really mean that I should be guided by him? That is it?'

She looked brightly at him for a moment. 'I have not known you long,' she murmured, 'but I think you will be guided only by yourself'; and, blushing slightly, she nodded and left him, to go to another guest.

They were all in the same tale. 'He is a rude overbearing man, Mr. Lindo,' Mrs. Hammond said roundly, even her good nature giving place to the *odium theologicum*. 'And I cannot imagine why Mr. Williams put up with him so long.'

'No, indeed,' said the archdeacon's wife, complacently smoothing down her skirt. 'But that is the worst of a town parish. You have this sort of people.'

Mrs. Hammond looked for the moment as if she would like to deny it. But under the circumstances this was impossible. 'I am afraid we have,' she admitted gloomily. 'I hope Mr. Lindo will know how to deal with him.'

'I think the archdeacon would,' said the other lady, shaking her head sagely.

But, naturally enough, the archdeacon was more guarded in his expressions. 'It is about removing the sheep from the churchyard, is it not?' he said, when he and Lindo happened to be left standing together and the subject came up. 'They have been there a long time, you know.'

'That is true, I suppose,' the rector answered. 'But,' he continued rather warmly—'you do not approve of their presence there, archdeacon?'

'No, certainly not.'

'Nor do I. And, thinking the removal right, and the responsibility resting upon me, ought I not to undertake it?'

'Possibly,' replied the older man cautiously. 'But pardon me making a suggestion. Is not the thing of so little importance that you may with a good conscience prefer quiet to the trouble of raising the question?'

'If the matter were to end there, I think so,' replied the new rector, with perhaps too strong an assumption of wisdom in his tone. 'But what if this be only a test case?—if to give way here means to encourage further trespass on my right of judgment? The affair would bear a different aspect then, would it not?'

'Oh, no doubt. No doubt it would.'

And that was all the archdeacon, who was a cautious man and knew Mr. Bonamy, would say. But it will be observed that the rector on his part had both altered his standpoint and done another thing which most people find easy enough: he had discovered an answer to his own arguments.

CHAPTER VIII.

TWO SURPRISES.

On the evening of the Hammonds' party, Mr. Clode sat alone in his room, trying to compose himself to work. His lamp burned brightly, and his tea-kettle—he had sent down his frugal dinner an hour or more—murmured pleasantly on the hob. But for some reason Mr. Clode could do no work. He was restless, gloomy, ill-satisfied. The suspicions which had been aroused in his breast on the evening of the rector's arrival had received, up to to-day at least, no confirmation; but they had grown, as suspicions will, feeding on themselves, and with them had grown the jealousy which had fostered them into being. The curate saw himself already overshadowed by his superior, socially and in the parish; and this evening felt this the more keenly that, as he sat in his little room, he could picture perfectly the gay scene at the Town House, where, for nearly two years, not a party had taken place without his presence, not a festivity been arranged without his co-operation. The omission to invite him to-night, however natural it might seem to others, had for him a tremendous significance; so that from a jealousy that was general he leapt at once to a jealousy more particular, and conjured up a picture of Laura—with whose disposition he was not unacquainted—smiling on the stranger, and weaving about him the same charming net which had caught his own feet.

At this thought the curate sprang up with a passionate gesture and began to walk to and fro, his brow dark. He felt sure that Lindo had no right to his cure, that he had been appointed by mistake; but he knew also that the cure was a freehold, and that to oust the rector from it something more than a mere mistake would have to be shown. If the rector should turn out to be very incompetent, if he should fall on evil times in the parish, then, indeed, he might find his seat untenable when the mistake should be discovered; and with an eye to this the curate had already dropped a word here and there—as, for instance, that word which had reached Mr. Bonamy. But Clode was not satisfied with that now. Was there no shorter, no simpler course possible? There was one; one only. The rector might be shown to have been aware of the error when he took advantage of it. In that case his appointment would be vitiated, and he might be compelled to forego it.

Naturally enough, the curate had scarcely formulated this to himself before he became convinced—in his present state of envy and suspicion—of the rector's guilt. But how was he to prove it? As he walked up and down the room, chafing and hot-eyed, he thought of a way in which proof might be secured. The letters which had passed between Lindo and Lord Dynmore's agents, in regard to the presentation, must surely contain some word, some expression sufficient to have apprised the young man of the truth —that the living was intended not for him but for his uncle. A look at those letters, if they were in existence, might give Stephen Clode, mere curate though he was, the whip-hand of his rector!

He had another plan in his mind, of which more presently; and probably he would have pursued the idea which has just been mentioned no farther if his eye had not chanced to light at the moment on a small key hanging upon a nail by the fireplace. Clode looked at the key, and his face flushed. He stood thinking and apparently hesitating, the lamp throwing his features into strong relief, while a man might count twenty. Then he sat down with an angry exclamation and plunged into his work. But in less than a minute he lifted his head. His glance wandered again to the key; and, getting up suddenly, he took it down, put on his hat, and went out.

His lodgings were over the stationer's shop, but he could go in and out through a private passage. He saw, as he passed, however, that there was a light in the shop, and he opened the side door. 'I am going to the rectory to consult a book, Mrs. Wafer,' he said, seeing his landlady dusting the counter. 'You can leave my lamp alight. I shall want nothing more to-night, thank you.'

She bade him good-night, and he closed the door again and issued into the street. Crossing the top of the town, he had to pass the Market Hall, where he spoke to the one policeman on night duty; and here he saw that it was five minutes to ten, and hastened his steps, in the fear that the rector's household might have retired. 'Lindo will not be home himself until eleven, at the earliest,' he muttered as he turned rapidly into the churchyard, which was very dark, the night being moonless. 'I have a clear hour. It was well that I looked in late the other night.'

But, whatever his design, it received a sudden check. The rectory was closed! The front of the house stood up dark and

shapeless as the great church which towered in front of it. The servants had gone to bed, and, as they slept at the back, he would have found it difficult to arouse them, had it suited his plans to do so. As it was, he did not dream of such a thing, and with a slight shiver—for the night was cold, and now that his project no longer excited him he felt it so, and felt, too, the influence of the night wind soughing in sad fashion through the yews—he was turning away, when something arrested his attention, and he paused.

The something he had seen, or fancied he had seen, was a momentary glimmer of light shining through the fanlight over the door. It could not affect him, for, if the servants had really closed the house for the night, even if they had not all gone to bed, he could scarcely go in. And yet some impulse led him to step softly into the porch and grope for the knocker.

His hand lit instead on the iron-studded surface of the old oak door, and, to his surprise, he felt it move slightly under his touch. He pushed, and the door slid slowly and silently open, disclosing the dusky outline of the hall, faintly illuminated by a thin shaft of light which proceeded apparently from the study, the door of which was a trifle ajar.

The sight recalled to the curate's mind the errand on which he had come, and he stole across the hall on tiptoe, listening with all his ears. He heard nothing, however, and presently he stood on the mat at the study door intercepting the light. Then he did hear the dull footsteps of someone moving in the room, and suddenly it occurred to him that the rector had stepped home to fetch something—a song, music, or a book possibly—and was now within searching for it. That would explain all.

The curate was seized with panic at the thought, and, fearful of being discovered in his present position—for though he might have done all he had done in perfect innocence, conscience made a coward of him—he crept across the hall again and passed out into the churchyard. There he stood in the darkness, waiting and watching, expecting the rector to bustle out each minute.

But five minutes passed, and even ten, as it seemed to the curate in his impatience, and no one came out, nor did the situation alter. Then he made up his mind that the person moving in the study could not be the owner of the house, and he went in again and, crossing the hall, flung the study door wide open and entered.

Instantly there was a ringing sound as of coins falling on the floor, and a man, who had been kneeling low over something, sprang

to his feet and gazed with wide, horror-stricken eyes at the intruder. A moment only the man looked, and then in a paroxysm of terror he fell again on his knees. 'Oh, mercy! mercy!' he cried, almost grovelling before the curate. 'Don't give me up! I have never been took! I have never been in gaol or in trouble in my life! I did not know what I was doing, sir! I swear I did not! Don't give me up!'

The man's cry, which was low and yet piercing, ended in hysterical sobbing. On the table by his side stood a single candle, and by its light Clode saw that the little cupboard among the books—the little cupboard to which the key in his own pocket belonged—was open. The curate started at the sight, and grew pale and red by turns. The words which he had been about to utter to the shrinking wretch begging for mercy on the floor before him died away in his husky throat. His eyes, however, burned with a gloomy rage, and when he recovered himself his voice was pitiless. 'You scoundrel!' he said, in the low rich tone which had been so much admired in the church when he first came to Claversham, 'what are you doing here? Get up and speak!' And he made as if he would spurn the creature with his foot.

'I am a respectable man,' the rogue whined. 'I am—that is I was, I mean, sir—don't be hard on me—Lord Dynmore's own valet. I will tell you all, sir.'

'I know you!' Clode rejoined, looking harshly at him. 'You were here this morning. And Mr. Lindo gave you money.'

'He did, sir. I confess it. I am a——'

'You are an ungrateful scoundrel!' Stephen Clode answered cutting the man short. 'That is what you are! And in a few days you will be a convicted felon, with the broad arrow on your clothes, my man!'

To hear his worst anticipations thus put into words was too much for the poor wretch. He fell on his knees, feebly crying for mercy, mercy! 'You are a minister of the Gospel. Give me this one more chance, sir!' he prayed.

'Stop that noise!' the curate growled fiercely, his dark face rendered more rugged by the light and shadow cast by the single candle. 'Be silent! do you hear? and get up and speak like a man, if you can. Tell me all—how you came here, and what you came for, and perhaps I may let you escape. But the truth, mind—the truth!' he added truculently.

The knave was too thoroughly terrified indeed to think of any-

thing else. 'Lord Dynmore dismissed me,' he muttered, his breath coming quickly. 'He missed some money in Chicago, and he gave me enough to carry me home, and bade me go to the devil! I landed in Liverpool without a shilling—sir, it is God's truth—and I remembered the gentleman Lord Dynmore had just put in the living here. I used to know him, and he gave me half a sovereign more than once. And I thought I would come to him. So I pawned my clothes, and came on.'

'Well?' exclaimed the curate, leaning forward, with fierce impatience in his tone. 'And then?'

'Sir?'

'Well? When you came here? What happened? Go on, fool!' He could scarcely control himself.

'I found a stranger,' whimpered the man—'another Mr. Lindo. He had got in here somehow.'

'Well? But there,' added the curate with a sudden change of manner, 'how do you know that Lord Dynmore meant to put the clergyman you used to know in here?'

'Because I heard him read a letter from his agents about it,' the man replied simply. 'And from what his lordship said I knew it was his old pal—his old friend, sir, I mean, begging your pardon humbly, sir.'

'And when did you learn,' said the curate more quickly, 'that the gentleman here was not your Mr. Lindo?'

'I heard in the town that he was a young man. And, putting one thing and another together, and keeping a still tongue myself, I thought he would serve me as well as the other, and I called——'

'What did you say?'

'Not much, sir,' the valet answered, a twinkle of cunning in his eye. 'The less said the sooner mended. But he understood, and he promised to give me ten shillings a week.'

'To hold your tongue?'

'Well, so I took it, sir.'

The curate drew a long breath. This was what he had suspected. It was to information which might be drawn from this man that his second scheme had referred. And here was the man at his service, bound by a craven fear to do his bidding—bound to tell all he knew. 'But why,' Clode asked suspiciously, a thought striking him, 'if what you say be true, are you here now—doing this, my man?'

'I was tempted, sir,' the servant answered, his tone abject again. 'I confess it truly, sir. I saw the money in the box here this morning, sir, and I thought that my ten shillings a week would not last long, and a little capital would set me up comfortably. And then the devil put it into my head that the young gentleman would not prosecute me, even if he caught me.'

'You did not think of me catching you?' retorted the curate grimly.

The man uttered a cry of anguish. 'That I did not, sir,' he sobbed. 'Oh, Lord! I have never had a policeman's hand on me. I have been honest always——'

'Until you took his lordship's money,' replied Clode quietly. 'But I understand. You have never been found out before, you mean.'

When people of a certain class, for whom respectability has long spelled livelihood, do fall into the law's clutch, they suffer very sharply. Master Felton continued to pour forth heartrending prayers; but he might have saved his breath. The curate's thoughts were elsewhere. He was thinking that a witness so valuable must be kept within reach at any cost, and it did flash across his brain that the best course would be to hand him over now to the police, and trust to the effect which his statements respecting the rector would produce upon the inquiry. But the reflection that the allegations of a man on his trial for burglary would not obtain much credence led Clode to reject this simple course and adopt another. 'Look here!' he said curtly. 'I am going to deal mercifully with you, my man. But—but,' he continued, frowning impatiently, as he saw the other about to speak—'on certain conditions. You are not to leave Claversham. That is the first. If you leave the town before I give you the word, I shall put the police on your track without an instant's delay. Do you hear that?

'I will stop as long as you like, sir,' said the servant submissively, but with wonder apparent both in his voice and face.

'Very well. I wish it for the present—no matter why. Perhaps because I would see that you lead an honest life for awhile.'

'And—how shall I live, sir?' asked the culprit timidly.

'For the present you may continue to draw your half-sovereign a week,' the curate answered, his face reddening, he best knew why. 'Possibly I may tell Mr. Lindo at once. Possibly I

may give you another chance, and tell him later, if I find you deserving. What is your address?'

'I am at the "Bull and Staff,"' muttered Felton. It was a small public-house of no very good repute.

'Well, stay there,' Stephen Clode answered after a moment's thought. 'But see you get into no harm. And since you are living on the rector's bounty, you may say so.'

The man looked puzzled as well as relieved, but, stealing a doubtful glance at the curate's dark face, he found his eyes still upon him, and cowered afresh. 'Yes, take care,' said Clode, smiling unpleasantly as he saw the effect his look produced. Do not try to evade me or it will be the worse for you, Felton. And now go! But see you take nothing from here.'

The detected one cast a sly glance at the half-rifled box which still lay on the carpet at his feet, a few gold coins scattered round it; then he looked up again. 'It is all there, sir,' he said, cringing. 'I had but just begun.'

'Then go!' said the curate impatiently, pointing with emphasis to the door. 'Go, I tell you!'

The man's presence annoyed and humiliated him so that he felt a positive relief when the valet's back was turned. Left alone he stood listening, a cloud on his brow, until the faint sound of the outer door being pulled to reached his ear; and then, stooping hastily, he gathered up the sovereigns and half-sovereigns, which lay where they had fallen, and put them into the box. This done, he rose and laid the box itself upon the table by his side; and again he stood, still and listening, a dark shade on his face.

Long ago, almost at the moment of his entrance, he had seen the pale shimmer of papers at the back of the little cupboard; and his heart had bounded at the sight. Now, still listening stealthily, he thrust in his hand and drew out one of the bundles of papers and opened it. The papers were parish accounts in his own handwriting! With a gesture of fierce impatience he thrust them back and drew out others, and, disappointed again in these, exchanged them hastily for a third set. In vain! The last were as worthless to him as the first.

He was turning away baffled and defeated, when he saw lying at the back of the lower compartment of the cupboard, whence the cash-box had come, two or three smaller packets, consisting apparently of letters. The curate reached hastily for one of these, and the discovery that it contained some of Lindo's private

accounts, dated before his appointment, made his face flush and his fingers tremble with eagerness. He glanced nervously round the room and stopped to listen; then, moving the candle a little nearer, he ran his eye over the papers. But here, too, though the scent was hot, he took nothing, and he exchanged the packet for one of the others. Looking at this, he saw that it was indorsed in the rector's handwriting, 'Letters relating to the Claversham Living.'

'At last,' Clode muttered, his eyes burning. 'I have it now.' The string which bound the packet was knotted tightly, and his fingers seemed all thumbs as he laboured to unfasten it. But he succeeded at length, and opening the uppermost letter (they were all folded across), saw that it was written from Lincoln's Inn Fields. 'My dear sir,' he read—just so far; and then—with a mighty crash which sounded awfully in his ears—the door behind him was flung open just as he had flung it open himself an hour before, and, dropping the letter, he sprang round, to find the young rector confronting him with a face of stupid astonishment.

CHAPTER IX.

TOWN TALK.

He was a man, as the reader will perhaps have gathered, of many shifts, and cool-headed; but for a moment he felt something of the anguish of discovery which had so tortured the surprised servant. The table shook beneath his hand, and it was with difficulty he repressed a wild impulse to overturn the candle, and escape in the darkness. He did repress it, however; nay, he forced his eyes to meet the rector's, and twisted his lips into the likeness of a smile. But when he thought of the scene afterwards he found his chief comfort in the reflection that the light had been too faint to betray his full embarrassment.

Naturally the rector was the first to speak. 'Clode!' he ejaculated, with a soft whistle, his surprise above words. 'Is it you? Why, man,' he continued, still standing with his hand on the door and his eyes devouring the scene, 'what is up?'

The money-box stood open at the curate's side, and the letters lay about his feet where they had fallen. The little cupboard yawned among the books. No wonder that Lindo's amazement, as he gradually took it all in, rather increased than diminished, or

that the curate's heart for a moment stood still: that his tongue was dry and his throat husky when he at last found his voice. 'It is all right. I will explain it,' he stammered, almost upsetting the table in his agitation. 'I expected you before,' he added fussily, moving the light.

'The dickens you did!' the rector ejaculated. It was difficult for him not to believe that his arrival had been the last thing expected.

'Yes,' returned the curate, with a little snap of defiance. He was recovering himself, and could look the other in the face now. 'But I am glad you did not come before, all the same.'

'Why?'

'I will explain.'

The light which the one candle gave was not so meagre that Clode's embarrassment had altogether escaped Lindo; and had the latter been a suspicious man he might have had queer thoughts, and possibly expressed them. As it was, he was only puzzled, and when the curate said he would explain, answered simply, 'Do.'

'The truth is,' said Clode, beginning with an effort, 'I have taken a good deal on myself, and I am afraid you will blame me, Mr. Lindo. If so, I cannot help it.' His face flushed, and he beat a tattoo on the table with his fingers. 'I came across,' he continued, 'to borrow a book a little before ten. The lights here were out; but, to my surprise, your house-door was open.'

'As I found it myself!' the rector exclaimed.

'Precisely. Naturally I had misgivings, and I looked into the hall. I saw a streak of light proceeding from the doorway of this room, and I came in softly to see what it meant. I heard a man moving about in here, and I threw open the door much as you did.'

'Did you?' said Lindo eagerly. 'And who was it—the man, I mean?'

'That is just what I cannot tell you,' the curate replied. His face was pale, but there was a smile upon it, and he met the other's gaze without flinching. He had settled his plan now.

'He got away, then?' said the rector, disappointed.

'No. He did not try either to escape or to resist,' was the answer.

'But was he really a burglar?'

'Yes.'

'Then where is he?' The rector looked round as if he

expected to see the man lying bound on the floor. 'What did you do with him?'

'I let him go.'

Lindo opened his mouth, and whistled; and when he had done whistling still stood with his mouth open and a face of the most complete mystification. 'You let him go?' he repeated mechanically, but not until after a pause of half a minute or so. 'Why, may I ask?'

'You have every right to ask,' the curate answered with firmness, and yet despondently. 'I will tell you why—why I let him go, and why I cannot tell you his name, Mr. Lindo. He is a parishioner of yours. It was his first offence, and I believe him to be sincerely penitent. I believe, too, that he will never repeat the attempt, and that the accident of my entrance saved him from a life of crime. I may have been wrong—I dare say I was wrong,' continued the curate, growing excited—excitement came very easily to him at the moment—'but I cannot go back from my word. The man's misery moved me. I thought what I should have felt in his place, and I promised him, in return for his pledge that he would live honestly in the future, that he should go free, and that I would not betray his name to anyone—to anyone!'

'Well!' exclaimed the rector, his tone one of unbounded admiration in every sense of the word. 'When you do a thing nobly, my dear fellow, you do do it nobly, and no mistake! I wonder who it was! But I must not ask you.'

'No,' said Clode. 'And now,' he continued, still beating the tattoo on the table, 'you do not blame me greatly?'

'I do not, indeed. No. Only I think perhaps that you should have retained the right to tell me.'

'I should have done so,' said the curate regretfully.

'He has taken nothing, I suppose?' the rector continued, turning to the cupboard, and, not only satisfied with the explanation, but liking Clode better than he had liked him before; speaking to him, indeed, with increased frankness.

'No,' the other answered. 'I was putting things straight when you entered and startled me. He had dropped the money about the floor, but you will find it right, I think. He has made a mess among the papers, I fear, and damaged the cupboard door in forcing it, but that is the extent of the mischief. By the way,' the curate added, 'I have a key to this cupboard at my lodgings. Williams gave it to me. He only kept parish matters here. I must let you have it.'

'Right,' said the rector carelessly; and, a few more words passed between them as to the attempted robbery, and the manner in which the outer door had been opened. Then the curate took his hat and prepared to go. 'You had a pleasant party, I suppose?' he said, pausing and turning when half-way across the hall.

'A *very* pleasant one,' Lindo answered with enthusiasm.

'They are nice people,' said Clode smoothly.

'They are—very nice. You told me I should find them so, and you were right. Good-night.'

'Good-night.'

Such harmless words! And yet they roused the curate's jealousy anew. As he walked home, the church clock tolling midnight above his head, he drank in no peaceful influence from the dark stillness or the solemn sound. He was gnawed by no remorse, but by fresh hatred of the man who had surprised and confounded him, and forced him to lie and quibble in order to escape from a dishonourable position. If you would make a man your enemy, come upon him when he is doing something of which he is ashamed. He will fear you afterwards, but he will hate you more. In the curate's case it was only he who knew himself discovered, so that he had no ground for fear. But he hated none the less vigorously.

And in some strange way an ugly rumour of which the new rector was the subject began in a few days to gain currency in the town. It was an ill-defined rumour, coming to one thing in one person's mouth and to a different thing in another's—a kind of cloud on the young man's fair fame, shifting from moment to moment, and taking ever a fresh shape, yet always a cloud.

One whispered that he had obtained the presentation as the reward of questionable services rendered to the patron. Another that he had forged his own deed of presentation, if such a thing existed. A third that he had been presented by mistake; and a fourth that he had deceived the authorities as to his age. It was noticeable that these rumours began low down in the social scale of the town and worked their way upwards, which was odd; and that, whatever form the rumour took, there was not one who heard it who did not within a fortnight or three weeks come to associate it with the presence of a seedy, down-looking, unwholesome man, who was much about the rector's doorway, and, when he was not there, was generally to be found at the 'Bull and Staff.' Whether he was the disseminator of the reports, or, alike with the rector,

was the unconscious subject of them, was not known; but at sight of him—particularly if he were seen, as frequently happened, in the rector's neighbourhood—people shrugged their shoulders and lifted their eyebrows, and expressed a great many severe things without using their tongues.

To the circle of the rector's personal friends the rumours did not reach. That was natural enough. To tell a person that his or her intimate friend is a forger or a swindler is a piquant but somewhat perilous task. And no one mentioned the matter to the Hammonds, or to the archdeacon, or to the Homfrays of Holberton, or the other county people living round, with whom it must be confessed that, after that dinner-party at the Town House, he consorted perhaps too exclusively. It might have been thought that even the townsfolk, seeing the young fellow's frank face passing daily about their streets, and catching the glint of his fair curly hair when the wintry sunlight pierced the lanthorn windows and fell in gules and azure on the reading-desk, would have been slow to believe such tales of him.

They might have been; but circumstances and Mr. Bonamy were against him. The lawyer did not circulate the stories; he had not mentioned them out-of-doors, nor, for aught the greater part of Claversham knew, had heard of them at all. But all his weight—and with the Low-Church middle class in the town it was great—was thrown into the scale against the rector. It was known that he did not trust the rector. It was known that day by day his frown on meeting the rector grew darker and darker. And the why and the wherefore not being understood—for no one thought of questioning the lawyer, or observed how frequently of late the curate happed upon him in the street or the reading-room—many concluded that he knew more of the clergyman's antecedents than appeared.

There was one person, and perhaps only one, who openly circulated and rejoiced in these rumours. That was a man whom Lindo would least have suspected; one whom he met daily in the street, and passed with a careless nod and a word, not dreaming for an instant that the spiteful little busybody was concerning himself with him. The man was Dr. Gregg, the snappish, ill-bred surgeon who had chanced upon Lindo and the Bonamy girls breakfasting together at Oxford. The sight, it will be remembered, had not pleased him. He had long had a sneaking liking for Miss Kate himself, and had only refrained from trying

to win her because he still more desired to be of the 'best set' in Claversham. He had been ashamed, indeed, up to this time of his passion; but, reading on that occasion unmistakable admiration of the girl in the young clergyman's face, and being himself rather cavalierly treated by Lindo, he had somewhat changed his views. The girl had acquired increased value in his eyes. Another's appreciation had increased his own, and, merely as an incident, the man who had effected this had earned his hearty jealousy and ill-will. And this, while Lindo thought him a vulgar but harmless little man.

But if the rector, immersed in new social engagements, did not see whither he was tending, others, though they knew nothing of the unpleasant tales we have mentioned, saw more clearly. The archdeacon, coming into town one Saturday five or six weeks after Lindo's arrival, did his business early and turned his steps towards the rectory. He felt pretty sure of finding the young fellow at home, because he knew it was his sermon day. A few yards from the door he fell in, as it chanced, with Stephen Clode. The two stood together talking, while the archdeacon waited to be admitted, and presently the curate said, 'If you wish to see the rector, archdeacon, I am afraid you will be disappointed. He is not at home.'

'But I thought that he was always at home on Saturdays?'

'Generally he is,' Clode replied, looking down and tracing a pattern with the point of his umbrella. 'But he is away to-day.'

'Where?' asked the archdeacon rather abruptly.

'He has gone to the Homfrays' at Holberton. They have some sort of party to-day, and the Hammonds drove him over.' Despite himself, the curate's tone was sullen, his manner constrained.

'Oh!' said the archdeacon thoughtfully. The Homfrays were his very good friends, but of the county families round Claversham they were reckoned the fastest and most frivolous. And he sagely suspected that a man in Lindo's delicate position might be wiser if he chose other companions. 'Lindo seems to see a good deal of the Hammonds,' he remarked after a pause.

'Yes,' said Clode. 'It is very natural.'

'Oh, very natural,' the archdeacon hastened to say; but his tone clearly expressed the opinion that 'toujours Hammonds' was not a good bill of fare for the rector of Claversham. 'Very natural, of course. Only,' he continued, taking courage, for he really liked the rector, 'you have had some experience here, and

I think it would be well if you were to give him a hint not to be too exclusive. A town rector must not be too exclusive. It does not do.'

'No,' said Clode.

'It is different in the country, of course. And then there is Mr. Bonamy. He is unpleasant, I know, and yet he is honest after a fashion. Lindo must beware of getting across with him. He has done nothing about the sheep yet, has he?'

'No.'

'Well, do not let him, if you can help it. You are not urging him on in that, are you?'

'On the contrary,' the curate answered rather warmly, 'I have all through told him that I would not express an opinion on it. If anything, I have discouraged him in the matter.'

'Well, I hope he will let it drop now. I hope he will let it drop.'

They parted then, and the archdeacon, sagely revolving in his mind the evils of exclusiveness as they affected town parsons, strolled back to the hotel where he put up his horses. On his way, casting his eye down the wide quiet street, with its old-fashioned houses on this side and that, he espied Mr. Bonamy's tall spare figure approaching, and he purposely passed the inn and went to meet him. As a county magnate the archdeacon could afford to know Mr. Bonamy, and even to be friendly with him. I am not sure, indeed, that he had not a sneaking liking and respect for the rugged, snappish, self-made man.

'How do you do, Mr. Bonamy?' he began loudly and cheerfully. And then, after saying a few words about a proposal to close a road in which he was interested, he slid into a mention of Lindo, with a view to seeing how the land lay. 'I have just been to call on your rector,' he said.

'You did not find him at home,' Bonamy replied, with a queer grin, and a little jerk of his head which sent his hat still farther back.

'No, I was unlucky.'

'Not more than most people,' said the churchwarden, with much enjoyment. 'I will tell you what it is, Mr. Archdeacon. Mr. Lindo is better suited for your position. He would make a very good archdeacon. With a pair of horses and a park phaeton and a small parish, and a little general superintendence of the district —with that and the life of a country gentleman he would get on capitally.'

There was just so much of a jest in the words that the clergyman had no choice but to laugh. 'Come, Bonamy,' he said good-humouredly, 'he is young yet.'

'Oh, yes, he is quite out of place here in that respect, too!' replied the lawyer naively.

'But he will improve,' the archdeacon pleaded.

'I am not sure that he will have the chance,' Mr. Bonamy answered in his gentlest tone.

The archdeacon was so far from understanding him that he did not answer save by raising his eyebrows. Could Bonamy really be so foolish, he wondered, as to think he could get rid of a beneficed clergyman? The archdeacon was surprised, and yet that was all he could make of it.

'He is away at Mr. Homfray's of Holberton now,' the lawyer continued, condemnation in his thin voice.

'Well, there is no harm in that, Mr. Bonamy,' replied the archdeacon, somewhat offended, 'as long as he is back to do the duty to-morrow.'

Mr. Bonamy grunted. 'A one-day-a-week duty is a very fine thing,' he said. 'You clergymen are to be envied, Mr. Archdeacon!'

'You would be a great deal more to be envied yourself, Mr. Bonamy,' the magnate returned, losing his temper at last, 'if you did not carp at everything and look at other people through distorted glasses. Fie! here is a young clergyman, new to the parish, and, instead of helping him, you find fault with everything he does. For shame! For shame, Mr. Bonamy!'

'Ah!' the lawyer answered drily, quite unabashed by the other's attack, 'you did not mean to say that when you came across the street to me. But—well, least said soonest mended, and I will wish you good evening. You will have a wet drive home, I am afraid, Mr. Archdeacon.'

And he put up his umbrella and went his way sturdily, while the archdeacon, crossing to his carriage, which was standing in front of the inn, entertained an uncomfortable suspicion that he had done more harm than good by his intercession. 'I am afraid,' he said to himself, as he handled the reins and sent his horses down the street in a fashion of which he was ordinarily not a little proud—'I am afraid that there is trouble in front of that young man. I am afraid there is.'

If he had known all, he would have shaken his head still more gravely.

(To be continued.)

SOME PAGAN EPITAPHS.

In the Reading-room of the British Museum, on the lower shelves of Press No. 2608, there stand some very big books. They are great folios, heavy and ponderous, hard to lift and awkward to handle. They are collections of Greek and Latin inscriptions. There are the five volumes of Boeckh. There is the colossal *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* of the Berlin Academy, which already numbers eighteen volumes. There are the contributions of our own countrymen, which are only just commencing. The contents of these big books have been gathered from all parts of the ancient world. Generations of scholars have contributed the results of their copying or ingenious guessing, and the work is still going on. By and by everything will be taken down, every letter that survives in bronze or marble will be gathered into these folios. Meantime a great deal has been done, and these ponderous tomes stand there in Press No. 2608 as a happy hunting-ground for the antiquarian, the philologist, and the historian.

But it is not with any very erudite intentions that I have been disturbing the repose of these heavy folios. The object of this paper is not to unsettle orthography or to reconstruct history. I have been looking only at the epitaphs, and the few I have selected and copied into my note-book are of purely general interest, and may have some attraction for readers who don't care about the internal economy of Athens or the administration of the Roman provinces. I cannot say that I have found many of much literary merit, though I have looked at a great number of inscriptions. But age lends some interest even to the most commonplace things, and these epitaphs have the dignity of many centuries to recommend them.

Perhaps the first impression one gets in looking over these pagan inscriptions is, that the ancient stone-cutters and epitaph-makers were very much like their modern successors. Like them they had their favourite epitaphs which they repeated over and over again. They had their stock phrases, their set forms. They had a fondness for verse and an inability to write verses that would scan. They made pretty much the same kinds of mistakes as

amuse us when we look over the old tombstones in country churchyards: bad metre, bad grammar, bad spelling are extremely frequent.

We know, for example, that the Romans were rather uncertain in the use of the aspirate, and we get a curious illustration of this when on one tombstone we find *ossa* (bones) spelt with an initial *h*.

An Athenian gentleman shows a confused syntax in the following example:

> Here Hippocrates hides in the earth his dear kind nurse, and now longs for thee.

Again, there is very much resemblance in the ruthless way in which an epitaph (generally in verse) is adapted to suit a different set of circumstances. Everyone knows the doggerel rhyme which is so very frequent on rustic tombstones—

> Here lies my precious (John) bereft of life;
> He was the best of husbands to a wife.

This is sometimes used with a woman's name in the first line, while the second, regardless of rhyme, is altered to—

> She was the best of wives to a husband.

Now in the Vatican Galleries there is a vase which presents the exact counterpart of this. There are inscribed on it some couplets of elegiac verse. These are very bad verses, and a little examination shows that their mistakes arose from the engraver having altered the masculine endings into feminine in order to make the inscription appropriate for the lady whose ashes the urn was destined to contain. He made these alterations and left the verse to shift for itself, but curiously enough in one place, when a change could have been made without violation of metre, he has left the masculine of his original copy.

Again, the common sentiment on the tombs of children is the prayer that the earth may not press heavily upon them. 'Lie lightly on the young' is a very usual phrase, and I have noticed one case where this with a grotesque inappropriateness is altered to—'Lie lightly on the middle-aged.'

One prominent feature in these general inscriptions is the request that nothing may be done to dishonour the tomb. Greek and Roman alike paid the greatest respect to the remains of the departed, and were very anxious that nothing should disturb the

ashes or the bones of the dead, or violate the sanctity of the sepulchre. Everybody will recall the lines on Shakespeare's tomb at Stratford-on-Avon, but for downright intensity of anathema the following would be hard to match in modern times:

I give to the Gods below, this tomb to keep, to Pluto, and to Demeter, and Persephone, and the Erinnyes, and all the Gods below. If anyone shall disfigure this sepulchre or shall open it, or move anything from it, to him let there be no earth to walk, no sea to sail, but may he be rooted out with all his race. May he feel all diseases, shuddering and fever, and madness, and whatsoever ills exist for beasts or men, may these light on him who dares move aught from this tomb.

This is from a tomb at Athens erected by a sorrowing wife to her husband, 'most sweet,' but similar expressions are very common. Sometimes in addition blessings are invoked on the man who leaves the tomb undisturbed, or who will make libations to the dead. Sometimes we meet the request that flowers may be thrown upon the tomb.

In some cases the sanctity of the tomb is defended, not by supernatural terrors, but by the prosaic statement of the fine to which the offending person made himself liable. Sometimes the particular form of desecration which was most to be feared was mentioned with a simple directness which one may admire but dare not imitate.

It often happened that a man erected a tomb in his own lifetime. In the case of the larger mausoleums the inscriptions generally stated for whom the erection was intended—so and so—'for himself and his descendants.' Freedmen were often to be buried with their patrons. On one tomb at Rome we read that Marcus Aemilius erected it 'for his brother, his wife, himself, his freedmen and freedwomen and their descendants, with the exception of Hermes, whom for his bad conduct I forbid to have any approach, access, or entrance to this monument.'

The specification of such exception was not infrequent, and the triplication of terms was the correct legal phraseology. We may quote here from the famous will of Dasumus. The testator specified that only three freedmen, whom he names, were to be buried in his mausoleum, and then continues:

I wish all whom I, before this will or by this will, have manumitted to have access, approach, and entrance to the mausoleum, except you, Hymnus, who, although you acknowledge that I have done a very great deal for you, yet have shown yourself so ungrateful that, on account of what I have endured from you or feared from you, I think you ought to be kept away even from my tomb.

Poor Hymnus! did he feel his exclusion very much, I wonder? Eighteen centuries have passed since then, and the reader may be a little curious about his misdeeds. One can hardly read many of these epitaphs without seeing that the ancients were less conventional than we are. One sees at least that they were outspoken in the expression of their feelings. Grief and vanity alike find a franker and more unrestrained utterance on these tombs than is usual in our Christian churchyards. Occasionally there was some very plain speaking about the deceased. Of one man we read that he was poor because he was too fond of good living:

'If he had known how to use moderation he would have been rich.' This epitaph concludes with a very feeble attempt at praise —the deceased was like Socrates in one thing, viz. that he knew well enough that he knew nothing.

But this candour on the part of the survivors was not common; as a rule, the epitaphs commemorate the virtues of model husbands, good wives, and dutiful children.

The praise of personal beauty holds a prominent place in many of these inscriptions. Over one Roman tomb the passers-by are asked to contribute the tribute of their sighs and tears: 'for Beauty's pattern perished when my Lyda died.' And, among the Elgin marbles of the British Museum, there is a remarkable epitaph which an Athenian husband, Ermeros by name, put up to Tryphera, 'his dear wedded wife,' who died at the age of twenty-five. Mention is made of her golden hair, her fair eyelids, her bright eyes, her sweet voice, her rosy lips, her ivory teeth, and then we are told that 'she had all kind of excellence in her lovely form.'

This may not seem to us to be in very good taste, and poor Ermeros's verses do not flow very smoothly, but we may hope he was sincere. Did he marry again, I wonder? Did he ever find again a lady with the bright eyes, and the golden hair, and all the rest of it? And, if so, did this second lady read the epitaph and point out the mistakes of metre, and try and make poor Ermeros ashamed of it?

Perhaps the most beautiful of all the epitaphs of this tender kind is one to a girl called Myia. It is so simple and direct and frank, that it might have been written by Catullus. I must not attempt to translate more than a few lines:

The deep tomb holds you now unconscious. You can't get angry now and leap upon me, and show your white teeth in sweetly playful bites.

So the inscription ends, and one feels that though Myia was not what she ought to have been, though she had never worn the yellow bridal veil, yet there was one man who really loved her and was sincerely sorry when she died.

There is another interesting epitaph on a girl who, like Myia, had died young. She is represented as lamenting her hard lot.

'O pleasant light of day!' she begins, 'O pleasant joy of living!'

She tells that she had been a slave, and, with a not unpleasing play on words, she begs for blessings on the mistress who set her free and gave her a place in the family vault.

Then she continues, 'And you, O youth, whom the Phrygian land brought forth—lament me not! Your kindnesses were pleasant to me while I lived, and now are pleasant to my ashes.'

These pagan mourners did not feel it necessary always to pretend to be resigned to the stroke of fate. We find on some tombs the utterance of the most poignant and unrestrained grief.

'When the grave engulphed you,' says one 'most unhappy father,' 'it took away my sole delight and cut the prop of my weak old age—so desolate and lonely [*i.e.* without any relations] do I live, that if the Manes had not forbidden I would have buried myself alive with you.'

Sometimes the bitter sense of injustice intensifies the grief of the poor mourner.

One 'most unhappy mother' commemorates the sad fact that in the space of four years she had lost three children, and then continues—'For ever and ever I am accursed with the Gods above and the Gods below.'

The following is from a slab of marble found at Athens:

> If there ever was a thoroughly good woman I am she—both in reference to righteousness and in all other ways. But being such I got no just return, neither from those from whom I expected it nor from Providence. Unhappy, I lie apart from my mother and father. I say nothing about what gratitude they showed me. Not they but my sons provided for me.

The high praise which this unfortunate lady is represented as claiming for herself leads us to hope that the epitaph was not her own composition, but the work of her sorrowing friends, perhaps of those sons 'who had provided for her.'

Again, where an Athenian youth assures the reader of his epitaph that he was a sculptor not inferior to Praxiteles, we may wonder whether that was the young gentleman's estimate of himself or the partial judgment of his fond friends.

A singer records that he 'was clever at all things, far the best of the Muses, most musical bird of all the Greeks.'

But this was probably the sentiment of his wife, for the epitaph goes on to say that she had had a splendid tomb put up to his memory in another place.

Still, it seems not to have been unusual for a man to compose his own epitaph. In some cases it is distinctly stated that this was done. Thus, the gentleman of Carthage, Vitalis by name, informs the public that he had his tomb made while he was alive, and that he used, as he went by, to read the verses he had inscribed on it. He says that every man of sense should follow his example. But this individual has very little to say for himself. He went over the whole province partly at the public expense. He hunted hares and afterwards foxes. Then he took to drinking, as he knew he wouldn't live long. One is sorry to think that Vitalis should have been anxious to hand down such a pitiful record; and then his grammar is bad and his spelling is bad, and there is a feeble attempt at something like a pun.

Still worse in grammar and spelling is the epitaph of Praecilius, a banker at Cirta. He, too, informs us that this inscription was got ready in his own lifetime, and there is a remarkable mixture of self-satisfaction and something like gratitude in what he says of himself:

'I was always wonderfully trustworthy and entirely truthful,' he remarks. 'I was sympathetic to everybody; whom have I not pitied anywhere?'

Then he states that he had a merry life, and a long one—'I celebrated a hundred happy birthdays; good fortune never failed me.'

Some curious and interesting facts about the deceased are occasionally recorded in their epitaphs. Thus an inscription tells us of a couple who died at the age of twenty-three at the same time from eating mushrooms. The husband, who was just two months older than the wife, earned his living by his needle; the wife was a weaver of wool. They were so poor that all their possessions only just sufficed to pay the expenses of the funeral pile. Their friends, who seem to have been poor too, made a collection amongst themselves and bought an urn, and hired a professional mourner, and the pontifex was good enough to give them a place for it free of charge.

Among the curiosities we may put the epitaphs on a tutor,

who, with the two children he had in charge, perished in an earthquake, and on a little girl whom the 'hand of magic'—'*saga manus*'—'snatched away' in some mysterious manner at the age of four.

'Parents, guard your children well,' is the advice given.

On some tombs we find it inscribed that the occupant was murdered by robbers. In one of these instances it was a lady who had met this cruel fate, and her sorrowing husband attributes it to her too profuse display of jewellery.

> If you love your wife [he says in her epitaph], don't give her too many bracelets. When she throws her arms round your neck and tells you she deserves some return for her goodness, give in a little to her in the way of dress, but refuse any glittering adornments. That's the way to keep off the robber and the gallant.

Again we have a little girl who dies at the age of five years seven months twenty-two days.

'While I lived I had plenty of fun,' she says, 'and everybody was fond of me.' Then she goes on to make a curious revelation. All through her life she had passed herself off as a boy. Her hair, which was red, had been cut short, and no one knew the secret of her sex except her mother and step-father.

A little boy who lived and died at Smyrna gives in halting verses a dreary catalogue of his complaints. 'Physicians were in vain,' and it is not easy to see what really ailed the little fellow.

> Then another very bad complaint got hold of me—much worse than the first complaint. For the sole of my foot had a dreadful wasting in the bones. Then my father's friends cut me open and took out the bones;

and so it goes on in a very bald, disjointed sort of way. The poor boy recovered from that complaint; but another ensued, and he died when a little more than four years old.

In this example, as in the last, the months and days were given, and this exactitude is quite usual. But we may class among the curiosities of the subject a certain epitaph of a Roman husband on his departed wife. He mentions the years, months, days, and even the hours that they had lived together, and then concludes:—'On the day of her death I gave the greatest thanks before Gods and men.'

I have not come upon any inscription so heartlessly frank as this. But a good many husbands seem a little formal in the expression of their grief. The Latin epitaphs especially tend rather to conventional phrases when the virtues of a wife are to be set forth; 'Incomparable' is a favourite epithet. 'Of whom I make

no complaint' strikes one as rather faint praise. 'De Qua N. D. A. N. Mortis' (*i.e.* 'De qua nullum dolorem accepi nisi mortis') —'who never grieved me except by her death'—is several times met with. It is significant, too, that a wife is often praised as 'a stayer at home,' or as having spun wool.

One husband remarks that his wife was not greedy. Another, 'She never scolded me.' 'We never had a quarrel' is often found —let us hope with a fair approximation to truth.

But in many cases a more genuine grief appears.

'You were a good wife,' one bereaved husband repeats more than once in a short inscription, as if he could find nothing else to say.

Another Roman epitaph gives a more fanciful and poetic expression to a husband's grief:

> I shall see you in dreams. I shall always repeat your sweet name, Flavia Nicopolis, so that the Manes can hear it. I shall often shed tears over your tomb. Might I see fresh flowers growing there, the amaranth or the violet, so that the passers-by might see the flowers, read the inscription, and say—This flower is the body of Flavia Nicopolis.

Again, at Cagliari in Sardinia, there is a sepulchre in honour of a wife's devotion. She and her husband lived happily together for forty-two years. She shared his 'heavy misfortunes'—*i.e.* probably his exile to Sardinia. There he was ill, and like to die, and she prayed that she might die instead of him. She does die, and her husband recovers, and commemorates her devotion by building a sepulchre which strangers may take for a temple, and by inscriptions on the sides of it in Latin and Greek. In one of these he, too, begs that her bones may turn to flowers, and he goes on to give quite a long list of the kinds he wants to see.

In another epitaph a Roman wife expresses her deep grief for her husband's loss. 'We loved each other,' she says, 'as boy and girl. O most holy Manes,' she goes on, 'guard my dear husband well, be very kind to him, and let me see him in the hours of the night, and then come swiftly and sweetly where he is.'

The wish to see the departed in dreams is very often found. 'I should die could I not in fancy talk with you.'

Reference should be made, in this connection, to the beautiful epitaph which was discovered at Rome in the fifteenth century. It is perhaps the best known and most admired of all, and speaks of a woman 'whose parents called her Claudia. She loved her husband from her heart.'

It would be hard to do justice to this beautiful epitaph in an English version. There is, in the second line, a quite untranslatable play on words—'Sepulchrum hau pulchrum pulchrae feminae.'

Perhaps the most touching and pathetic of all epitaphs are on children. I give one of these in the exact form of the original:—

D. M.
TERENTIAE P. F. ASIATICAE.
P. TERENTIVS QVIETVS ALVMN
HIC JACET EXANIMVM
DILECTAE CORPVS ALVMNAE
QVAM PARCAE INSONTEM
MERSERVNT FVNERE ACERBO
NONDVM ETENIM VITAE DECIMVM
COMPLEVERAT ANNVM
ET MIHI CRVDELES TRISTEM
FECERE SENECTAM
NAMQVE EGO TE SEMPER
MEA ALVMNA ASIATICA QVAERAM
ADSIDVEQVE TVOS VOLTVS
FINGAM MIHI MERENS
ET SOLAMEN ERIT. QVOD TE
IAM IAMQVE VIDEBO
CVM VITA FVNCTVS IVNGAR TIS VMBRA FIGVRIS.

This epitaph may be paraphrased as follows:—

Here lies the lifeless body of my beloved foster-daughter, whom, innocent, the Fates overwhelmed with bitter death. For she had not yet completed the tenth year of her life. And to me the cruel Fates have made a sad old age. For, my dear child, I shall be always seeking for you. Continually shall I call up your face as I grieve, and it will be my consolation. Soon, soon shall I see you, when life is done, and I, as a shadow, shall again embrace thy form.

Perhaps still more interesting is an epitaph on a little boy who died suddenly at the age of two. His grandparents seem to have felt his loss keenly. 'He would so delight his grandfather,' we read, 'with his little voice, that all the neighbours used to say, *O dulce Titu!* In the space of two years he lived as if he had lived sixteen years, for he had such intelligence as if he was hurrying to the grave.'

Then we have a little girl who died before she was eight years old, just when 'her wanton playfulness was beginning to contrive sweet freaks of mischief. Had you lived,' the inscription ends, 'no girl in the world would have been more accomplished than you.'

Here I may mention the epitaph on a young actress who died at the age of fourteen, just after she had made a most successful *début*. She was 'taught and trained almost by the hands of the Muses,' but she had to die, and her professional 'zeal, her trouble, her love, her praise, her honours are hushed and silent in ashes and in death.'

Very pathetic, too, is the simple expression of grief which, in slightly varying forms, is found on several tombs.

'Well may'st thou rest, my son. Thy mother begs thee to take her to thee.'

A great variety of moral sentiments is to be found among these epitaphs. A very large number are inspired by the thought of the vanity of life and the certainty of death. Here are some specimens:

Weary traveller who pass me by, though you may walk about for a long time, yet you will have to come here.

At your birth the Fates gave you this home.

Our wishes deceive us, time cheats us, and death mocks our cares. Anxious life is nothing.

Nothing we do is of use. Glory is vain.

Live joyfully. However thou livest, life is a gift of little worth.

This gloomy moralising was generally coupled with the advice to enjoy life while it lasted, and to get as much pleasure as possible. 'Eat and drink and amuse yourself,' appears on many a tomb as the sum and substance of what the dead man had to say. His whole system of philosophy was in those three words. The trite maxim 'Live for the day—live for the hour' is as frequent in these epitaphs as it is in the poems of Horace. The shallow sophistry of this teaching is contradicted by one of the inscriptions I have noticed. 'Don't live,' this sensible individual says, 'as if you were immortal, nor yet as if you had such a very brief space, or you may have the unpleasantness of an impecunious old age.'

Now and then the sentiment or the precept is of a loftier strain:

'The gifts of the wise Muses are best.'

'Live the rest of thy life nobly.'

But these moralisings, or immoralisings, are not more diverse than the views about death and the future life which are expressed or implied on these tombstones. Sometimes we find the flattest negation:

'I was nothing. I am nothing.'

The following reminds one of the epitaphs which the late Professor Clifford composed for himself:

'I was not. I am not. I grieve not.'

A Greek inscription found at Rome is still more outspoken in its denial of the current theological belief.

'Traveller,' it says, 'don't pass by this inscription, but stand, and hear, and learn something before you pass on. There is no boat to Hades, no boatman Charon, no dog Cerberus, but all the dead are bones and dust and nothing else.'

In direct opposition to these sceptical views stands one of the Latin epitaphs:—

'If you think there are no Manes, enter into some compact' (*i.e.* back up your opinion by a stake of some kind), 'invoke them, and you will see.'

On the other hand, many epitaphs express the hope of some sort of reunion with the departed and the expectation of some reward for virtue:

'I lived honourably. This now is of service to my remains.'

This sentiment is often repeated.

'Special honours will be given you from Pluto and from Proserpine' is the pious hope of an affectionate Athenian.

Some epitaphs express a bolder faith:

> Thou art not dead, but gone to a better land; thou dwellest with full delight in the Isles of the Blest. There, in the Elysian plain, freed from all ills, thou rejoicest amid soft flowers. Cold hurts thee not, nor heat; disease does not molest thee, hunger nor thirst can trouble thee.

This is from a Greek epitaph found at Rome. One dug up at Smyrna nearly two and a half centuries ago expresses a still more audacious confidence.

'The house of the blessed Gods holds me,' it says. 'I dwell with the blest in the starry heavens, and sit on golden thrones,' and so on through sixteen hexameter verses.

More of such citations might be given, and the inquiry naturally arises, what really was the popular belief among the Greeks and Romans as to a future life? But this question cannot be even briefly discussed at the end of a paper like this.

A PAIR OF EARS.

I.

'Mr. Faulkner, I have news for you,' said the Iviza vice-consul, entering the room in which the other was seated at a table over some brandy-and-water and an ancient periodical.

'News! I wonder how you get at it in this den of a place. Is it that Don John's hen has given birth to a double-yolked egg, or what?'

'Now, really, sir, I'm in earnest. Listen. It was only a half-hour ago that I was with his illustriousness the Bishop, who, you know, lives for the present in the high part of the town, where one can see towards Formentera. We were regarding the water when, lo! a noble yacht of the English kind passed through the sound, and seemed to drop her anchor within a mile of the rocks. Then she let off a little boat, and one, two, three, four people descend into her—two ladies, and two mariners, in blue and white. Well, sir, I was surprised. But I forget all about it in a little while, until I meet the lieutenant, who run towards me near the drawbridge and say I be needed. "There is," said he, "an English lady of distinguished birth on the Marina, and she is inflamed with Don John because of the dirtiness of his rooms. She demands the English consul, and I entreat you to go and see her!" Hearing this I am agitated, Mr. Faulkner, for Iviza does not receive many visitors of rank. But I make all speed and arrive in time to console Don John. The man had—really he had—told her ladyship she might go on her knees to him for a bed, and even then he would not give it her. You know what a man he is, an *hidalgo* to the toe-nails! But I made that all right, and for the present there will be peace. And now, sir, you being an Englishman, you will come to make her ladyship's acquaintance, will you not?'

Mr. Faulkner had been much interested in this story. Towards the close of it he had glanced at himself in the mirror, and straightened his back and curled his moustaches. The reflection seemed to please him.

'Well, 'tis a rum go!' he exclaimed. 'What's her name?'

'She is the Countess of Squirm—her ladyship's maid informed me—and what you would call an "original," I imagine.'

'Oh, really! Of course, one knows the Earl of Squirm as well as one's a, b, c. Then, I take it, she isn't in her first youth, Señor Marianas?'

'Well, no, sir. She is grey, but so sprightly, and yet quite the aristocrat. I beg of you to share the responsibility of her with me!'

'With all the pleasure in life, Señor Marianas. I will wash my hands, and then I will be with you.'

Mr. Faulkner was a dark-horse sort of man of about five-and-thirty. He had come to Iviza, which is the smallest of the Balearic Islands, about a month back. Any other people except Spaniards would have been untiring in their efforts to learn what he had come to Iviza for. He had no business transactions with the fig and nut growers, and he didn't know a soul in the place. However, Iviza accepted him, and there he was.

He was really a very shady sort of customer—a man who had played many parts in life, very few of them being to his credit. It behoved him to obliterate himself for awhile, and as he had journeyed from the Riviera to Barcelona, from Barcelona to Palma, the capital of Majorca, and thence to Iviza, which is some fifty miles away from Majorca, the detective who ferreted him out would be a man with an uncommon amount of talent in him.

'And now, my dear sir, are you ready?' asked the vice-consul, with a show of genial impatience.

'Perfectly. Perhaps, if you were to mention incidentally that I am one of the Trotley Faulkners, it might interest her ladyship. We are an old family, you know.'

'Ah yes, sir; and you English have all the pride of birth that we Castilians also possess. A fine thing, sir, to have blue blood in the veins!'

'Oh, very; nearly as fine as to have plenty of cash in one's pockets.'

It was a funny scene this introduction.

The Countess of Squirm was seated in the dining-room of Don John's hotel, watching through her long-handled glasses the process of the *puchero* for the evening meal. Mademoiselle Marie, her maid, stood by the window looking very disconsolately at the rather muddy water of the little inner harbour of the place. Don John was stumping about the room with a good deal

of swagger and an air of challenge that seemed to forebode another battle royal at any moment. And the fat-armed cook-maid, who was making the *puchero*, now and again peeped up from the mess of crabs' legs and mutton snippings to examine the Countess's jewels and head-dress, and to make some request of Don John which that gentleman immediately blocked with a testy 'Caramba, no! it is impossible.'

'Your ladyship,' said the vice-consul, advancing with a profound obeisance, 'this is the English gentleman I have already spoke about—Mr. Faulkner—if you please!'

The Countess shot a quick searching glance at the man, and said 'Good afternoon!' in the most casual manner.

Mademoiselle Marie, who was a Swiss girl of some five-and-twenty years, felt much more interested. She was rather pretty, and had a trick of pleasing British males.

'Surely, Countess,' observed Mr. Faulkner in a very easy tone, 'you are much to be pitied for being in Iviza.'

'Oh, am I? Is it such a very bad sort of hole, then?'

'Well, your ladyship sees what hotel accommodation it has, and——'

'Oh, there's nothing so very distressing about this—at least to me—I do assure you. I have lived for six weeks on end in Bedouin tents, and reckon myself an old traveller, sir!'

'That is something, certainly. I do hope you will not find the inconveniences of Iviza quite too oppressive. For my part——'

'Ah yes, why are *you* here, Mr. Faulkner? There's no shooting to speak of, the guide-book says.'

'No, I am no sportsman. I wanted seclusion for a time, to get through some—literary work.'

'Really?' exclaimed the Countess in an aroused manner. 'How very interesting! Can you play cribbage?'

'I think I remember enough of it to say "Yes."'

'Then I tell you what, Mr. Faulkner; if you don't mind, we'll have a tussle this evening. Cribbage is one of my pet weaknesses. Squirm hates it, I am sorry to say, but he does not stand in the way of my playing. My poor mother had the same passion, and I have made a point of teaching it to my children. I wouldn't give a fig for a man or woman who doesn't know it.—Marie!'

'Your ladyship.'

'Unpack the V case, and get out the cards and cribbage-board. Shall we say at six this evening, then?'

'I am quite at your ladyship's commands,' said Faulkner, much astonished.

'Thank you. *Au revoir*!'

'Well, I'll be hanged if I ever met such a woman!' exclaimed Mr. Faulkner when he was again outside, and the familiar smell of the Iviza sewage matter assailed his nose. 'Anyhow, we'll see how the evening turns out.'

The Countess of Squirm was a chartered eccentric. She did things that would have distracted a husband less long-suffering than the Earl of Squirm. The Earl, however, let her go her own gait. She was his senior by nearly ten years; immensely rich, and a Roman Catholic. Because she was so rich, and a Catholic, the Earl, who was poor and Protestant, felt that he could not, even if he would, put his veto upon her propensities for gadding here, there, and everywhere, just when the whim took her.

Besides, at sixty a woman may generally go where she pleases in the world, and be safe from molestation.

Some said the Countess of Squirm was a second Lady Hester Stanhope. It was only half a compliment. She had characteristics in common with the great Lady Hester; but, unlike Lady Hester, with all her eccentricity, she was sensible enough at heart. She was not in the least disposed to make herself into a prophetess, or anything of the kind.

She was an original woman of the world, who enjoyed her originality and the world. This seems a satisfactory brief portrayal of her.

And so, when she told the Delayahs that she would feel obliged to them if they would put her and her maid ashore in Iviza, it was felt that objections would be futile. The Delayahs protested, of course, that they did not like to leave her ladyship in a remote Spanish island, and alone. They insisted upon anchoring off Iviza to give her a chance of rejoining the yacht. But all this had no effect upon the Countess, and she told Mr. Delayah so flatly that she had had enough of his yacht and its luxuries, and that she would not go on board it again, that the gentleman was almost huffed. And so, when the boat returned to it, the master dallied off Iviza no longer, but put the vessel's head towards Palma of Majorca without more hesitation. Men don't understand women like Lady Squirm.

II.

THEIR first evening at cribbage was decidedly amusing to the Spaniards who were in the hotel. They had to sit to it in the dining-room when the gentlemen had done with their wine; and ten or twelve bad cigars were being smoked while they cut the cards and played.

Marie, the maid, thought it all extremely odious.

She preferred the English to Spaniards. And it certainly was trying to have to sit thus, as it were, on guard over an elderly lady who was well able to take care of herself.

As for the Countess, she was in high spirits. Situations of this kind were a real cordial to her. She showed remarkable vivacity, and Mr. Faulkner quite fancied he was getting well established in her ladyship's good graces. Fortunately for him (or perhaps unfortunately) he was a smart player. But he had the tact to bring each game to as close a fight as possible.

Towards ten o'clock, when they had played about twenty games, the Countess yawned without covering her mouth, and pushed the cribbage-board away.

'That will do, thank you, Mr. Faulkner, for the present. I owe you for seven games, do I not? Seven times five are thirty-five—I'll give it you in English money, if you don't mind. Marie, pay Mr. Faulkner thirty-five shillings. Good-night!'

'Just as if I were a hairdresser, or something of the kind,' muttered Mr. Faulkner to himself with a frown. But he squeezed the girl's pretty little hand when she offered him two sovereigns with a request for change.

'Do you want a receipt?' he asked.

'Monsieur!' exclaimed Marie, much shocked; and then she followed the Countess.

For three mortal days this life lasted, save for a couple of hours in the morning, when the Countess took the air in one of the somewhat rough little carts of Iviza. She and Mr. Faulkner were always at cribbage. In the course of that time the gentleman won about five pounds. It was not much, but it sufficed to pay his expenses at Iviza for a fortnight.

On the fourth morning the vice-consul bustled into the hotel.

'Your ladyship,' he said hurriedly, 'there is an opportunity

you may not like to miss. A barque has arrived this morning from Alicante, and she departs at sunset precisely for Trapani, in Sicily. If your ladyship still wishes——'

'Why, of course I do, Señor Marianas. It is the very thing. Have the goodness to arrange for a passage at once, if the accommodation is no worse than this of Don John's. I shall have no difficulty in getting from Trapani up to Rome just in time for the Holy Week functions. Marie, is it not providential?'

'Yes, your ladyship,' said the girl, much pleased. 'But——' and she glanced towards Mr. Faulkner, who had by this endeared himself to her.

'But what?'

'How your ladyship will miss your cribbage with Mr. Faulkner!'

'For the matter of that, Countess,' said the gentleman immediately, 'if you do not object to my society, I should be glad of the chance of reaching Sicily direct.'

'Object! Of course not. It will suit me admirably, in fact: I shall have plenty of time for my revenge. She's bound to get becalmed somewhere. They're divine old slow-coaches, these Mediterraneaners!'

'Thank you,' said Mr. Faulkner, with a look at Marie that the girl seemed to appreciate.

It was easily arranged. The captain of the 'Alfonso,' as the barque was called, gave up his own room to the Countess and Marie, and the first officer inconvenienced himself for Mr. Faulkner.

Twenty-four hours after the entrance of the 'Alfonso' into Iviza Bay the ship was a score of miles south-east of the island, and our three friends were on deck, under an awning, with the cribbage-board.

You must not suppose that all this time Mr. Faulkner was enjoying himself beyond measure. He was not. Really, he was well-nigh bored to death; but he endured the tedium for the sake of a certain little plan that he had concocted with himself. And it was also for the sake of this plan that he pretended to feel an affection for the girl Marie, who could not or would not disguise from him that she thought him a delightful gentleman.

'Well, I declare!' exclaimed her ladyship. 'Two for his nob again, which gives you the game just when I seemed safe to play up. Mr. Faulkner, you must have been born under a lucky star.

I hope your novels sell well. You write under a *nom de plume*, of course. I wouldn't for anything print a book of mine under my own name.'

This was the way in which the Countess was wont to rattle on. She seemed not to need a companion with the gift of speech. If he had ears to hear, and hands, and a mind wherewith to play to her, that was sufficient.

They had good winds for their little voyage. This brought them within sight of Sicily in about a week from Iviza. The Countess was delighted. She had had enough of Mr. Faulkner. He had become '*vraiment un peu ennuyant!*' as she confided to her maid: which meant that she would cut herself adrift from him the moment they set foot on civilised land.

But Marie designed that it should be otherwise. She was in love with Mr. Faulkner as much as she could be in love with anyone. And in their various moments of mutual conversation she had told Mr. Faulkner all about her ladyship's luggage—which trunk held the jewel-case, upon what bank the letters of credit were drawn, and so forth.

'My little angel!' Faulkner was wont to term her when they were quite alone. But though she was his little angel, she never paid him a single shilling more than his due (from the cribbage-board), even by accident. She was a loyal little girl, though her heart was feminine and frivolous.

III.

PURPLE mountains and the deep blue sea—of such is the fair haven of Trapani composed. The town, too, is engaging, and by no means a common haunt for the North European in search of the gay sunny life of the South.

No sooner had they got ashore, and obtained lodging in the Golden Lion Inn, than Mr. Faulkner wrote a letter in cipher and despatched it by a special messenger, upon whom he impressed that his life, or rather his pay (which was to be abundant), depended upon the promptitude of its delivery.

It was Thursday when the letter was despatched. An answer might be looked for on the Friday evening or Saturday morning.

'Well,' said the Countess when they were at dinner on the

Thursday evening, 'we will have our last game, Mr. Faulkner, to-night; and I prophesy to you that you will lose. Clever men like you always ruin themselves by not leaving off in time. Will you accept my challenge?'

'Why, certainly, Countess. But why may I not be privileged to continue travelling towards Italy with you?'

'To tell you the truth, Mr. Faulkner, for two reasons: first, because I propose to make an unconventional journey on horseback to Castellamare, there to catch the train for Palermo; and in the second place, because (you mustn't be offended) I think our acquaintance has lasted quite long enough.'

'Oh, your ladyship!' exclaimed Marie, much shocked at this slight to so interesting, handsome, and self-sacrificial a gentleman.

'Yes, you do well, Marie, to reproach me,' observed the Countess, with a little shrug of her shoulders; 'but I am used to having my own way, Mr. Faulkner, and I generally say what I think. However, perhaps I do seem a little uncivil, especially as you can't really have cared much for all this cribbage with an old woman like me. I'll ask you, therefore, to be so good as to escort me to Castellamare.'

'With the greatest pleasure,' replied Mr. Faulkner, somewhat too eagerly. 'But you will not think of starting before Saturday or Monday?'

'*Au contraire*; I shall start to-morrow morning, as early as possible.'

'But your ladyship is not of iron. Besides, remember the road is not one of the safest.'

'Brigands, eh? Well, I'd like above all things to have a brush with them, if it weren't for the delay of it. As it is, however, I'm in a hurry, and I fancy we are the more likely to get through safely just because we start at once before any exaggerated ideas and intelligence about Squirm's wealth and mine drift up towards the mountains. I have ordered horses for six o'clock, Mr. Faulkner.'

'I think you are acting very imprudently, Countess. Will you not say Saturday morning?'

'I am sorry I cannot oblige you even so far, Mr. Faulkner. Cards, Marie!'

That evening the Countess won every game. It was most surprising. They played for three hours and a half, and Mr. Faulkner lost ten pounds.

'It is a case of Providence backing the big battalions after all, I fancy,' her ladyship remarked when she rose to go to bed. 'Until to-morrow at six, then, Mr. Faulkner.'

'Deuce take it!' exclaimed our friend when he was alone. He looked at his watch in a state of agitation. It was half-past ten—an hour when all Sicily is asleep. 'There may just be time,' he muttered. Thereupon he put on his hat, and went to the house of a man who was a notorious member of the Mafia. The two greeted each other with a sort of unholy fervour. They stayed in confabulation for half an hour. Then Mr. Faulkner returned to the Golden Lion, and the Mafia man having saddled his lean-ribbed little white pony, rode away towards the mountains at a fretful pace.

IV.

It was inexpressibly galling to Mr. Faulkner that nothing happened to alter her ladyship's plans for the morrow. The innkeeper himself aroused the gentleman with the words that the horses were ready at the door, and that the Countess was breakfasting.

They started punctually at six o'clock, which is early for March. It was nipping cold, too; so cold that it gave Marie a blue nose, though it seemed only the more to brace her ladyship's energies.

'We shall have an enchanting excursion, Mr. Faulkner; I feel sure of it,' she said, while eyeing him rather subtly.

'I trust we may,' was his reply. For the life of him he could not refrain from satire at the Countess's expense. 'I suppose your ladyship,' he added, 'will not attempt to play cribbage on the way?'

'I'm afraid it's impossible,' she replied, with a sweet smile. 'Besides, I'm quite content with my laurels of last night. You are sure, Marie, you have seen the luggage properly registered to Palermo?'

'Quite, your ladyship.'

'Then there's nothing to do but bow to our friend the landlord, and be off.'

The Countess of Squirm accordingly bowed to the proprietor of the Golden Lion and switched her horse.

'I don't think I was ever made such a fool of in all my days,'

muttered Mr. Faulkner to himself. 'Well, it will be a lesson, I'll be hanged if it won't!'

Poor gentleman! If only he had known to what last extremity his unhallowed cupidity was to bring him, he would have been even more at discord with himself.

Two hours passed, and the party were all in the mountains. Marie had displayed a certain amount of respectful pettishness towards her mistress. She was unused to riding, and her animal was none of the most urbane in disposition. But the Countess took her maid's ill humour in admirable part, and wherever she looked she smiled. Towards eleven o'clock, when they were nearing a place which the guide said would make a capital bivouac, it began to rain. This was bad. But hardly ten minutes later worse followed. Three picturesque-looking rogues with guns on their shoulders stepped from a wood called the Bosco di Sparagio, and, having saluted the Countess, brought the party to a halt. The guide uttered the one word 'Banditti!' and took to his heels. No one heeded him.

Mr. Faulkner at once entered into heated conversation with the three men. There seemed to be something wrong. They were not the men he expected; and at length he had to turn to the Countess with consternation written on his face.

'This is a pretty condition of affairs,' he said.

'And how long will they keep us?' asked the Countess, with a look of elation which said as plainly as an expression may speak, 'At last I have reached the highest summit of my ambition. I have lived sixty years, and never until to-day have I come across a real live brigand.'

'How should I know! It is unfortunate that your ladyship is the Countess of Squirm—unfortunate for me, that is.'

'Oh, come now, don't say that. We are in the same box, anyhow, and I shall take care that you do not suffer on my account.'

'Your ladyship is very good,' observed Mr. Faulkner.

They had no time to say more just then, for the brigands urged them to ascend the mountain to the right by a track that left a good deal to be desired. The helpless Marie in particular was soon at her wits' end. She slipped off her horse twice, and at length, after an indignant protest, had to submit to be held up by one of the three rogues, their captors. He was the ugliest of them, which did not tend to soothe her.

Thus they came at length to a glen, high up and looking to-

wards the Mediterranean. There was a dismal rain-cloud low upon them at the time, and even the Countess of Squirm's spirits had somewhat abated. It was fully two hours past her luncheon hour, and the guide's pony had carried off the provision-basket as well as its master.

It was the usual thing, this haunt of the bandits. There was a nice smooth little plateau with precipitous rocks on three sides of it, accessible by one track only, and that a sufficiently perilous one. The bandits' home was a cave with a very dirty black face. A good deal of brushwood piled near told of the fires which were responsible for this discoloration.

The troop consisted of but five men, including the *capo*. There was one woman in the establishment, the captain's wife. All the five, and the woman too, seemed rarely pleased with their luck in having captured the millionaire *duchessa*, of whose arrival in Trapani, and subsequent eccentric intentions, they had had brisk intelligence. Dinner was, at her ladyship's request, served as quickly as possible.

With her usual *savoir faire*, she had entered into immediate negotiation with the *capo*. It was a case of ransom, of course; the matter to be decided upon was, equally of course, the amount.

'We will talk it over while we eat your macaroni,' said her ladyship lightly. 'But have the goodness to remember that I must be in Palermo before this time to-morrow.'

The *capo* shrugged his shoulders and said: 'It is possible.' Then, turning to Mr. Faulkner, who seemed stupefied by this incident, he flourished his hands towards him, and, still speaking to the Countess, remarked that if her ladyship was content to leave his illustriousness the duke as a hostage until the payment of the ransom, he thought her ladyship might catch the evening train from Castellamare to Palermo.

'Pardon,' interposed Mr. Faulkner, 'but I am not privileged to be the duke.'

'Without doubt, excellency?' said the *capo*, with an obnoxious grin of incredulity.

'He is not my husband, nor has he anything to do with me,' exclaimed the Countess. 'I am afraid we shall all have to stay here a little while after all.'

'Oh, but you will alter your mind when you have rested,' said the *capo*. 'Besides, we are short of provisions. It is a hardship, but true.'

In fact, the dinner was a very sad one. The macaroni was indifferently cooked, and as an *entrée* a sheep's windpipe was served. Not one of the captives would be introduced to this tempting dish, and so the dinner was not a success.

'Mr. Faulkner,' said the Countess seriously, when she saw that there was nothing to follow the windpipe, 'let us talk this matter over. He wants fifty thousand pounds for the three of us. It's ridiculous, and we can make them happy with a good deal less, I don't doubt. What I want to know is, will you be content to act as hostage? There's no other way out of it that I can see.'

'I will do anything to oblige your ladyship,' said Mr. Faulkner, with ill-concealed vexation.

'You must allow me to take this on my shoulders. The escapade is mine, and I must pay for it. It's not a bit of good trying to convince them that you aren't my husband, and there's an end of it. Dear me! it would be diverting to have Squirm here, really!'

'Capo!' called Mr. Faulkner.

The brigand leader was as anxious to get so precious a lady as the Countess off his hands as she was to leave him. Finally, it was agreed that Mr. Faulkner should stay on Mount Sparagio until twenty thousand pounds had been paid to the rogues. The Countess promised to use all possible expedition. At Rome she proposed to make arrangements for the procural of the money, and thence it would be despatched without delay.

This settled, two of the rascals constituted themselves guides to her ladyship and the gentle Marie. They led them to Castellamare by a short bridle-path, which enabled them to reach Palermo the same evening. Thence, the next day, they proceeded to Naples, and from Naples they soon reached Rome.

Here, to the Countess's utter consternation, it was discovered that the pocket-book containing the address to which the bandit wished their money to be conveyed was missing.

Her ladyship wrote at once to the British consul in Palermo, imploring him to make inquiries. But these inquiries were of no avail. The local *gendarmerie* had already had news of the abduction, and they were in possession of Mount Sparagio and the district. So hot was their siege, in fact, that the *capo* and the troop, with Mr. Faulkner in their charge, absconded towards the mountains of the interior. Of course, however, they left a shrewd deputy behind them, to receive the twenty thousand pounds.

For a month the rascals put up with the discomforts this hue and cry had brought upon them. They reckoned they would eventually have their reward. With the ransom they would retire for ever from brigandage and become decent landowners.

But when five weeks had passed, and not even a line reached them about the money, they became exceedingly impatient. They had already been somewhat uncivil to the 'duke,' as they called Mr. Faulkner. This gentleman had tried all ways to get into their good graces, but in vain. They were not Mafia Sicilians, and would not believe in his insinuations that he was a member of that order. When he told them point-blank that he himself had been scheming for the capture of the Countess of Squirm, in alliance with these same Mafia men, they grew furious. They would not, they said, tolerate being thus jested with by his excellency much longer.

'If,' said the *capo*, 'your dukeship is not ransomed by Thursday next, we shall deprive your excellency of his ears. They will be sent to this address of "Madama," with which she was so good as to furnish us.'

It was vain for Mr. Faulkner to protest.

Thursday arrived. At sunset our poor friend was cropped; and the same evening the appendages were packed, and sent prepaid to England. This was the only clue to him that remained when three months had passed.

The Countess of Squirm and her maid returned to England in Whitsun week, and among her ladyship's letters was a small parcel containing two withered ears and a line of scrawl which said that, unless the twenty thousand pounds was sent in a month, his excellency the duke would have his throat cut. The money was not sent, for the reason already mentioned. There is no doubt, therefore, that Mr. Faulkner died a violent death.

The Countess was naturally much distressed to think that she should be the cause, though the innocent cause, of a fellow-creature's assassination; but, being a devout Catholic, she had recourse to her confessor, who at length consoled her.

Marie, the maid, was somewhat more persistent in her grief. She had not outgrown her heart. But at the end of a year even she had almost forgotten 'the gentleman who played cribbage with her ladyship.' Mr. Faulkner was then remembered only by his various creditors in different parts of the world.

HIGH LIFE.

EVERYBODY knows mountain flowers are beautiful. As one rises up any minor height in the Alps or the Pyrenees, below snow-level, one notices at once the extraordinary brilliancy and richness of the blossoms one meets there. All nature is dressed in its brightest robes. Great belts of blue gentian hang like a zone on the mountain slopes: masses of yellow globe-flower star the upland pastures: nodding heads of soldanella lurk low among the rugged boulders by the glacier's side. No lowland blossoms have such vividness of colouring, or grow in such conspicuous patches. To strike the eye from afar, to attract and allure at a distance, is the great aim and end in life of the Alpine flora.

Now, why are Alpine plants so anxious to be seen of men and angels? Why do they flaunt their golden glories so openly before the world, instead of shrinking in modest reserve beneath their own green leaves, like the Puritan primrose and the retiring violet? The answer is, Because of the extreme rarity of the mountain air. It's the barometer that does it. At first sight, I will readily admit, this explanation seems as fanciful as the traditional connection between Goodwin Sands and Tenterden Steeple. But, like the amateur stories in country papers, it is 'founded on fact,' for all that. (Imagine, by the way, a tale founded entirely on fiction! How charmingly aerial!) By a roundabout road, through varying chains of cause and effect, the rarity of the air does really account in the long run for the beauty and conspicuousness of the mountain flowers.

For bees, the common go-betweens of the loves of the plants, cease to range about a thousand or fifteen hundred feet below snow-level. And why? Because it's too cold for them? Oh, dear, no: on sunny days in early English spring, when the thermometer doesn't rise above freezing in the shade, you will see both the honey-bees and the great black bumble as busy as their conventional character demands of them among the golden cups of the first timid crocuses. Give the bee sunshine, indeed, with a temperature just about freezing-point, and he'll flit about joyously on his communistic errand. But bees, one must remember, have heavy bodies and relatively small wings: in the

rarified air of mountain heights they can't manage to support themselves in the most literal sense. Hence their place in these high stations of the world is taken by the gay and airy butterflies, which have lighter bodies and a much bigger expanse of wing-area to buoy them up. In the valleys and plains the bee competes at an advantage with the butterflies for all the sweets of life: but in this broad sub-glacial belt on the mountain-sides, the butterflies in turn have things all their own way. They flit about like monarchs of all they survey, without a rival in the world to dispute their supremacy.

And how does the preponderance of butterflies in the upper regions of the air affect the colour and brilliancy of the flowers? Simply thus. Bees, as we are all aware on the authority of the great Dr. Watts, are industrious creatures which employ each shining hour (well-chosen epithet, 'shining') for the good of the community, and to the best purpose. The bee, in fact, is the *bon bourgeois* of the insect world: he attends strictly to business, loses no time in wild or reckless excursions, and flies by the straightest path from flower to flower of the same species with mathematical precision. Moreover, he is careful, cautious, observant, and steady-going—a model business man, in fact, of sound middle-class morals and sober middle-class intelligence. No flitting for him, no coquetting, no fickleness. Therefore, the flowers that have adapted themselves to his needs, and that depend upon him mainly or solely for fertilisation, waste no unnecessary material on those big flaunting coloured posters which we human observers know as petals. They have, for the most part, simple blue or purple flowers, tubular in shape and, individually, inconspicuous in hue; and they are oftenest arranged in long spikes of blossom to avoid wasting the time of their winged Mr. Bultitudes. So long as they are just bright enough to catch the bee's eye a few yards away, they are certain to receive a visit in due season from that industrious and persistent commercial traveller. Having a circle of good customers upon whom they can depend with certainty for fertilisation, they have no need to waste any large proportion of their substance upon expensive advertisements or gaudy petals.

It is just the opposite with butterflies. Those gay and irrepressible creatures, the fashionable and frivolous element in the insect world, gad about from flower to flower over great distances at once, and think much more of sunning themselves

and of attracting their fellows than of attention to business. And the reason is obvious, if one considers for a moment the difference in the political and domestic economy of the two opposed groups. For the honey-bees are neuters, sexless purveyors of the hive, with no interest on earth save the storing of honey for the common benefit of the phalanstery to which they belong. But the butterflies are full-fledged males and females, on the hunt through the world for suitable partners: they think far less of feeding than of displaying their charms: a little honey to support them during their flight is all they need:—'For the bee, a long round of ceaseless toil; for me,' says the gay butterfly, 'a short life and a merry one.' Mr. Harold Skimpole needed only 'music, sunshine, a few grapes.' The butterflies are of his kind. The high mountain zone is for them a true ball-room: the flowers are light refreshments laid out in the vestibule. Their real business in life is not to gorge and lay by, but to coquette and display themselves and find fitting partners.

So while the bees with their honey-bags, like the financier with his money-bags, are storing up profit for the composite community, the butterfly, on the contrary, lays himself out for an agreeable flutter, and sips nectar where he will, over large areas of country. He flies rather high, flaunting his wings in the sun, because he wants to show himself off in all his airy beauty: and when he spies a bed of bright flowers afar off on the sun-smitten slopes, he sails off towards them lazily, like a grand signior who amuses himself. No regular plodding through a monotonous spike of plain little bells for him: what he wants is brilliant colour, bold advertisement, good honey, and plenty of it. He doesn't care to search. Who wants his favours must make himself conspicuous.

Now, plants are good shopkeepers; they lay themselves out strictly to attract their customers. Hence the character of the flowers on this beeless belt of mountain-side is entirely determined by the character of the butterfly fertilisers. Only those plants which laid themselves out from time immemorial to suit the butterflies, in other words, have succeeded in the long run in the struggle for existence. So the butterfly-plants of the butterfly-zone are all strictly adapted to butterfly tastes and butterfly fancies. They are, for the most part, individually large and brilliantly coloured: they have lots of honey, often stored at the base of a deep and open bell which the long proboscis of the

insect can easily penetrate: and they habitually grow close together in broad belts or patches, so that the colour of each reinforces and aids the colour of the others. It is this cumulative habit that accounts for the marked flower-bed or jam-tart character which everybody must have noticed in the high Alpine flora.

Aristocracies usually pride themselves on their antiquity: and the high life of the mountains is undeniably ancient. The plants and animals of the butterfly-zone belong to a special group which appears everywhere in Europe and America about the limit of snow, whether northward or upward. For example, I was pleased to note near the summit of Mount Washington (the highest peak in New Hampshire) that a large number of the flowers belonged to species well known on the open plains of Lapland and Finland. The plants of the High Alps are found also, as a rule, not only on the High Pyrenees, the Carpathians, the Scotch Grampians, and the Norwegian fjelds, but also round the Arctic Circle in Europe and America. They reappear at long distances where suitable conditions recur: they follow the snow-line as the snow-line recedes ever in summer higher north toward the pole or higher vertically toward the mountain summits. And this bespeaks in one way to the reasoning mind a very ancient ancestry. It shows they date back to a very old and cold epoch.

Let me give a single instance which strikingly illustrates the general principle. Near the top of Mount Washington, as aforesaid, lives to this day a little colony of very cold-loving and mountainous butterflies, which never descend below a couple of thousand feet from the wind-swept summit. Except just there, there are no more of their sort anywhere about: and as far as the butterflies themselves are aware, no others of their species exist on earth: they never have seen a single one of their kind, save of their own little colony. One might compare them with the Pitcairn Islanders in the South Seas—an isolated group of English origin, cut off by a vast distance from all their congeners in Europe or America. But if you go north some eight or nine hundred miles from New Hampshire to Labrador, at a certain point the same butterfly reappears, and spreads northward toward the pole in great abundance. Now, how did this little colony of chilly insects get separated from the main body, and islanded, as it were, on a remote mountain-top in far warmer New Hampshire?

The answer is, they were stranded there at the end of the glacial epoch.

A couple of hundred thousand years ago or thereabouts—don't let us haggle, I beg of you, over a few casual centuries—the whole of northern Europe and America was covered from end to end, as everybody knows, by a sheet of solid ice, like the one which Frithiof Nansen crossed from sea to sea on his own account in Greenland. For many thousand years, with occasional warmer spells, that vast ice-sheet brooded, silent and grim, over the face of the two continents. Life was extinct as far south as the latitude of New York and London. No plant or animal survived the general freezing. Not a creature broke the monotony of that endless glacial desert. At last, as the celestial cycle came round in due season, fresh conditions supervened. Warmer weather set in, and the ice began to melt. Then the plants and animals of the sub-glacial district were pushed slowly northward by the warmth after the retreating ice-cap. As time went on, the climate of the plains got too hot to hold them. The summer was too much for the glacial types to endure. They remained only on the highest mountain peaks or close to the southern limit of eternal snow. In this way, every isolated range in either continent has its own little colony of arctic or glacial plants and animals, which still survive by themselves, unaffected by intercourse with their unknown and unsuspected fellow-creatures elsewhere.

Not only has the glacial epoch left these organic traces of its existence, however; in some parts of New Hampshire, where the glaciers were unusually thick and deep, fragments of the primæval ice itself still remain on the spots where they were originally stranded. Among the shady glens of the White Mountains there occur here and there great masses of ancient ice, the unmelted remnant of primæval glaciers; and one of these is so large that an artificial cave has been cleverly excavated in it, as an attraction for tourists, by the canny Yankee proprietor. Elsewhere the old ice-blocks are buried under the débris of moraine-stuff and alluvium, and are only accidentally discovered by the sinking of what are locally known as ice-wells. No existing conditions can account for the formation of such solid rocks of ice at such a depth in the soil. They are essentially glacier-like in origin and character: they result from the pressure of snow into a crystalline mass in a mountain valley: and they must have remained there unmelted ever since the close of the glacial epoch, which, by Dr. Croll's calculations, must most probably have ceased to plague our earth some eighty thousand years ago. Modern America, how-

ever, has no respect for antiquity: and it is at present engaged in using up this palæocrystic deposit—this belated storehouse of prehistoric ice—in the manufacture of gin slings and brandy cocktails.

As one scales a mountain of moderate height—say seven or eight thousand feet—in a temperate climate, one is sure to be struck by the gradual diminution as one goes in the size of the trees, till at last they tail off into mere shrubs and bushes. This diminution—an old commonplace of tourists—is a marked characteristic of mountain plants, and it depends, of course, in the main upon the effect of cold, and of the wind in winter. Cold, however, is by far the more potent factor of the two, though it is the least often insisted upon: and this can be seen in a moment by anyone who remembers that trees shade off in just the self-same manner near the southern limit of permanent snow in the Arctic regions. And the way the cold acts is simply this: it nips off the young buds in spring in exposed situations, as the chilly sea-breeze does with coast plants, which, as we commonly but incorrectly say, are 'blown sideways' from seaward.

Of course, the lower down one gets, and the nearer to the soil, the warmer the layer of air becomes, both because there is greater radiation, and because one can secure a little more shelter. So, very far north, and very near the snow-line on mountains, you always find the vegetation runs low and stunted. It takes advantage of every crack, every cranny in the rocks, every sunny little nook, every jutting point or wee promontory of shelter. And as the mountain plants have been accustomed for ages to the strenuous conditions of such cold and wind-swept situations, they have ended, of course, by adapting themselves to that station in life to which it has pleased the powers that be to call them. They grow quite naturally low and stumpy and rosette-shaped: they are compact of form and very hard of fibre: they present no surface of resistance to the wind in any way; rounded and boss-like, they seldom rise above the level of the rocks and stones whose interstices they occupy. It is this combination of characters that makes mountain plants such favourites with florists: for they possess of themselves that close-grown habit and that rich profusion of clustered flowers which it is the grand object of the gardener by artificial selection to produce and encourage.

When one talks of 'the limit of trees' on a mountain-side, however, it must be remembered that the phrase is used in a

strictly human or Pickwickian sense, and that it is only the size, not the type, of the vegetation that is really in question. For trees exist even on the highest hill-tops: only they have accommodated themselves to the exigencies of the situation. Smaller and ever smaller species have been developed by natural selection to suit the peculiarities of these inclement spots. Take, for example, the willow and poplar group. Nobody would deny that a weeping willow by an English river, or a Lombardy poplar in an Italian avenue, was as much of a true tree as an oak or a chestnut. But as one mounts towards the bare and wind-swept mountain heights one finds that the willows begin to grow downward gradually. The 'netted willow' of the Alps and Pyrenees, which shelters itself under the lee of little jutting rocks, attains a height of only a few inches; while the 'herbaceous willow,' common on all very high mountains in Western Europe, is a tiny creeping weed, which nobody would ever take for a forest tree by origin at all, unless he happened to see it in the catkin-bearing stage, when its true nature and history would become at once apparent to him.

Yet this little herb-like willow, one of the most northerly and hardy of European plants, is a true tree at heart none the less for all that. Soft and succulent as it looks in branch and leaf, you may yet count on it sometimes as many rings of annual growth as on a lordly Scotch fir-tree. But where? Why, underground. For see how cunning it is, this little stunted descendant of proud forest lords: hard-pressed by nature, it has learnt to make the best of its difficult and precarious position. It has a woody trunk at core, like all other trees; but this trunk never appears above the level of the soil: it creeps and roots underground in tortuous zigzags between the crags and boulders that lie strewn through its thin sheet of upland leaf-mould. By this simple plan the willow manages to get protection in winter, on the same principle as when we human gardeners lay down the stems of vines: only the willow remains laid down all the year and always. But in summer it sends up its short-lived herbaceous branches, covered with tiny green leaves, and ending at last in a single silky catkin. Yet between the great weeping willow and this last degraded mountain representative of the same primitive type, you can trace in Europe alone at least a dozen distinct intermediate forms, all well marked in their differences, and all progressively dwarfed by long stress of unfavourable conditions.

From the combination of such unfavourable conditions in

Arctic countries and under the snow-line of mountains there results a curious fact, already hinted at above, that the coldest floras are also, from the purely human point of view, the most beautiful. Not, of course, the most luxuriant: for lush richness of foliage and 'breadth of tropic shade' (to quote a noble lord) one must go, as everyone knows, to the equatorial regions. But, contrary to the common opinion, the tropics, hoary shams, are not remarkable for the abundance or beauty of their flowers. Quite otherwise, indeed: an unrelieved green strikes the keynote of equatorial forests. This is my own experience, and it is borne out (which is far more important) by Mr. Alfred Russel Wallace, who has seen a wider range of the untouched tropics, in all four hemispheres—northern, southern, eastern, western—than any other man, I suppose, that ever lived on this planet. And Mr. Wallace is firm in his conviction that the tropics in this respect are a complete fraud. Bright flowers are there quite conspicuously absent. It is rather in the cold and less favoured regions of the world that one must look for fine floral displays and bright masses of colour. Close up to the snow-line the wealth of flowers is always the greatest.

In order to understand this apparent paradox one must remember that the highest type of flowers, from the point of view of organisation, is not at the same time by any means the most beautiful. On the contrary, plants with very little special adaptation to any particular insect, like the water-lilies and the poppies, are obliged to flaunt forth in very brilliant hues, and to run to very large sizes in order to attract the attention of a great number of visitors, one or other of whom may casually fertilise them; while plants with very special adaptations, like the sage and mint group, or the little English orchids, are so cunningly arranged that they can't fail of fertilisation at the very first visit, which of course enables them to a great extent to dispense with the aid of big or brilliant petals. So that, where the struggle for life is fiercest, and adaptation most perfect, the flora will on the whole be not most, but least, conspicuous in the matter of very handsome flowers.

Now, the struggle for life is fiercest, and the wealth of nature is greatest, one need hardly say, in tropical climates. There alone do we find every inch of soil 'encumbered by its waste fertility,' as Comus puts it; weighed down by luxuriant growth of tree, shrub, herb, creeper. There alone do lizards lurk in every hole;

beetles dwell manifold in every cranny; butterflies flock thick in every grove; bees, ants, and flies swarm by myriads on every sun-smitten hillside. Accordingly, in the tropics, adaptation reaches its highest point; and tangled richness, not beauty of colour, becomes the dominant note of the equatorial forests. Now and then, to be sure, as you wander through Brazilian or Malayan woods, you may light upon some bright tree clad in scarlet bloom, or some glorious orchid drooping pendent from a bough with long sprays of beauty: but such sights are infrequent. Green, and green, and ever green again—that is the general feeling of the equatorial forest: as different as possible from the rich mosaic of a high alp in early June, or a Scotch hillside deep in golden gorse and purple heather in broad August sunshine.

In very cold countries, on the other hand, though the conditions are severe, the struggle for existence is not really so hard, because, in one word, there are fewer competitors. The field is less occupied; life is less rich, less varied, less self-strangling. And therefore specialisation hasn't gone nearly so far in cold latitudes or altitudes. Lower and simpler types everywhere occupy the soil; mosses, matted flowers, small beetles, dwarf butterflies. Nature is less luxuriant, yet in some ways more beautiful. As we rise on the mountains the forest trees disappear, and with them the forest beasts, from bears to squirrels; a low, wind-swept vegetation succeeds, very poor in species, and stunted in growth, but making a floor of rich flowers almost unknown elsewhere. The humble butterflies and beetles of the chillier elevation produce in the result more beautiful bloom than the highly developed honey-seekers of the richer and warmer lowlands. Luxuriance is atoned for by a Turkey carpet of floral magnificence.

How, then, has the world at large fallen into the pardonable error of believing tropical nature to be so rich in colouring, and circumpolar nature to be so dingy and unlovable? Simply thus, I believe. The tropics embrace the largest land areas in the world, and are richer by a thousand times in species of plants and animals than all the rest of the earth in a lump put together. That richness necessarily results from the fierceness of the competition. Now, among this enormous mass of tropical plants it naturally happens that some have finer flowers than any temperate species; while as to the animals and birds, they are undoubtedly, on the whole, both larger and handsomer than the fauna of colder climates. But in the general aspect of tropical nature an occa-

sional bright flower or brilliant parrot counts for very little among the mass of lush green which surrounds and conceals it. On the other hand, in our museums and conservatories we sedulously pick out the rarest and most beautiful of these rare and beautiful species, and we isolate them completely from their natural surroundings. The consequence is that the untravelled mind regards the tropics mentally as a sort of perpetual replica of the hot-houses at Kew, superimposed on the best of Mr. Bull's orchid shows. As a matter of fact, people who know the hot world well can tell you that the average tropical woodland is much more like the dark shade of Box Hill or the deepest glades of the Black Forest. For really fine floral display in the mass, all at once, you must go, not to Ceylon, Sumatra, Jamaica, but to the far north of Canada, the Bernese Oberland, the moors of Inverness-shire, the North Cape of Norway. Flowers are loveliest where the climate is coldest; forests are greenest, most luxuriant, least blossoming, where the conditions of life are richest, warmest, fiercest. In one word, High Life is always poor but beautiful.

SPARROWS.

Now in the country-side from hawthorn snows,
Hedging lush-grass the thrush's rapture goes;
Full of long-garnered bliss his heart o'erflows.

All that he sees, he sings. Wove in his trill
The purple hollows of the windy hill,
Green valley-spaces very warm and still;

The poplar's gold-edged leaflets trembling nigh;
The little pied-faced pansy 'mid the rye;
The sweet encompassing of azure sky;

Thin through translucent leaves, the sunshine's rifts;
The low brook's mossy gurgle where there lifts
Pale rose-stemmed primrose through the bronzèd drifts.

But the poor dingy sparrow of the town!
He babbles as he flies—a garrulous clown,
A sorry piper in his threadbare brown.

Yet all he feels he, too, full-hearted gives;
His little twitter speaks the joy he lives
There as he sits upon the sunlit eaves.

'Tis a poor vain conceit—lacks all but will—
A vague reiterate chirrup, small and shrill;
Still he pours forth his heart for good or ill.

Though 'tis scant measure, yet his being's brim
Is with Spring's nectar foaming to the rim,
Holds he no more, 'tis running o'er for him.

He sings the budding bushes of the square,
The opaque blue unveiling dully fair,
The inexplicable wonder of the air;

And, as he sings, each common sordid thing
Wears for a space occult transfiguring—
The sparrow the interpreter of Spring!

Ah, heart! content thee with thy little song;
Content thee, be its compass weak or strong;
Stammer thy spirit's message, right or wrong.

The meanest thing in nature's plan is dear
If it but work its purpose out sincere:
A little cup may yet hold water clear.

Not thine the lordly utterances of fate,
The invincible pealing clarion of the great;
Yet there are thoughts thou would'st articulate.

High souls have hymned high themes, yet not voiced thee;
In narrowest lives there is a mystery
Deep and unplumbed, whose singer 's yet to be.

Something within no other soul has known—
An individual secret of their own
That God has whispered unto them alone.

Speak from the heart! all else is incomplete;
Speak to the heart! for that alone is sweet;
Weak words are mighty that with heart-blood beat.

Sing out thy meagre life's obscurest cares;
Sing out the burden that thy dumb soul bears.
Perchance some heart may bless thee unawares!

SEASONABLE WEATHER.

I HAVE never crossed the Line. Though I have been within hail of the Southern Cross; seen rain come down, not in bucketfuls, but 'strings' (which they say marks the downpour of the tropics); gazed in amazement almost incredulous at the Canadian Aurora Borealis, and stood under an African midnight sky full of stars bigger and more luminous than planets, or lit with a moon which showed the smallest print—I know nothing (except from hearsay) about the heats, colds, winds, calms, clouds, and sunshine of another hemisphere. I perceive, however, a deeper meaning than he probably intended to convey in the remark of an American visitor when he was asked what he thought about English weather, and replied, 'Waal, sir, I guess you have only samples. He intended to express his sense of that pervading inferiority which characterises all British possessions or experience, and yet he hit on one peculiarity of our insular position which makes the British climate unique. He was right. Few though our square miles may be, they show meteorological specimens of every sort. We cannot, indeed, boast of a blizzard (Yankee, I suppose, for 'blows hard'), which sweeps a region three thousand miles in width; but half an acre of it is enough in an eastern county, when it comes straight from the Ural mountains, and any moisture it may have had has been sucked out of it by the dryness of Europe. Thus we feel the most arid airs of our own Continent, and yet, on the other hand, we have none of the juice taken out of the west wind before it begins to fall upon the Irish Coast. The rain-cloud which travels from America is tapped by us before it reaches our nearest neighbours, and the bitterness of a Siberian wind takes its last edge as it passes over waterless France. Even a lake might put a spoonful into it in passing, but our friends across the Channel have hardly a pond on this side of their Alps, and only add a dash of snow to the cold breezes which come to us across their fields and hills.

I had hardly taken my pen off the word 'samples,' by which our American cousins designate our scraps of weather, than I was introduced by a friend, who has visitors from all parts of the world (I once met Captain Semmes, of the 'Alabama,' in his com-

pany), to a leading Ojibbeway Indian, who combined the dress of a clergyman with red ribbons round his neck (by which hung enormous medals commemorating I know not what), and talked English with smiling readiness and an indescribable accent. 'Sir,' said I, 'I hope you will receive pleasant impressions of our country.' 'Well,' he replied, 'I landed in this last March, and in the first fortnight of my visit saw more snow than I had seen during the whole winter in Canada.'

It is not often that one has so speedy a confirmation of a sentence. The Ojibbeway had seen a 'sample' of our weather, and yet it was outside ordinary British experience, and could not be taken to illustrate the real behaviour of any season that we know. The blizzard, *e.g.*, of one awful night in winter, when we thought of men with numb-cold fingers 'lying out' on swaying yards, and presently heard of some frozen stiff in the rigging, when our shores were fringed with disaster, when the papers said that the Channel was 'full of wreckage,' and helpless railway engines as well as sheep had to be dug out of drifts, may have been a 'sample'; but the supply which it represented could not, methinks, be greeted, however pleasantly, as 'seasonable' by those well-clad people who smile at bitter frosts. Nevertheless, even that night did not come without results which were immediately claimed as desirable by some. One of the submerged tenth, for instance, immediately floated up, with a shovel, at my snow-blocked door and flatly declined to clear the pavement before the house for less than a shilling. 'You see, sir,' he said (very civilly and with smiles of satisfaction), ''taint often we gets such a job.' So I let him do it, and, though his tool was imperfect, the whole business was over in less than half an hour, the wage pocketed, and the workman re-engaged elsewhere. Indeed, while many were full of pity for the poorest during the last long winter frost, they were not the most usually indigent who suffered most, but the steady workers at out-door trades, such as that of bricklaying. They could tide over the delay of one month, but many of them were sorely pinched when they had to stand idle for two. The loafers then reaped a fine winter harvest in sweeping ice and serving skaters. A friend happened to hear one of them, in the middle of the frost, complaining to a mate that he had earned only seven pounds in a particular week! Fact. The secretary of a well-known charitable society remarked to me that 'casuals' had never had such a season. Certainly no begging-gang was

seen, or heard to sing, in my street throughout the whole of the last long winter frost, except on the first day of its arrival, before the ice in the parks began to bear. The weather was seasonable to them, at any rate. I know that many reckon our bitter springs to be wholesome to the many and not to the few alone. When Kingsley wrote his ode to the north-east wind which 'crisps the lazy dyke, and hungers into madness every plunging pike,' we were bidden to enjoy it as 'breeding' hardy men. No doubt the inhabitants of a land swept by icy gales are likely to show robust life, but that is because they are tough to begin with. They are the survivors, not the children, of the freezing blast. The northern savage is swift and strong. He endures where the whiteface faints from fatigue. But this is no result of his individual training. It comes from the weak and sickly among his ancestors having been killed off in their youth, and before they became the progenitors of offspring feebler than themselves. I do not believe that the Red Indian feels any access of strength when the Canadian January brings 'seasonable weather.' He hugs himself in his blanket, and would doze over the fire in his wigwam were he not obliged to use the occasion for hunting animals, which are, in their turn, handicapped by the snow, and more accessible than in summer. Winter is one of the four seasons, and we must take it as it comes; but we cannot see that it is an occasion for the stoppage of all natural growth without suspecting that it brings a sharp trial to all that is feeble or imperfect. The strong sap which has unfolded a million leaves retires to—well, botanists could say, perhaps; anyhow, the tree, naked because its living clothes have been stripped off, waits for a time while the cold sits in judgment on all life and decides that only the hardiest shall see another year. And unless civilisation stepped in, and with tender care physicked the sickly, sending some to other climes, putting others to bed, and generally nursing the faint stores of health, we should all be as vigorous as savages, or at least as those sturdy inhabitants of the middle ages whose endurance we read of, though we do not know how many of their young children, and those that were weak and sickly among them, were inexorably disposed of. It is one of the anomalies of experience that ignorance of sanitary laws, and exposure to the risks of life, may result in the presence of a hardy race. The fittest survive. The care which is now benificently bestowed upon the sick, and the artificial protection of the helpless, leave

us with those who would otherwise have disappeared, and who not only drag on a debilitated existence, but become in many instances the parents of children who start the business of life with a still lower account at the bank of health than their progenitors. If the science which now shields us from pernicious physical influences and backs the naturally strong, had never been reached, we who survived might all have been as lusty as the Last of the Mohicans. Do not suppose, my readers, that I admire blizzards or commend infanticide and the euthanasia of the physically useless. Power to relieve the suffering is God-given. A perception of the sacredness of life, whether seen in the cripple or the athlete, is divine, and behind all the result of our imperfect civilisation lies that growing desire and purpose to better the lot of the poor and needy which marks the Christian faith.

We have wandered somewhat from our original purpose, which was to consider 'seasonable weather,' but the side-path was a natural and legitimate one. In returning to it I ask what distinguishes each of our four conventional seasons; and it is a pleasant thought to begin with that, if we repeat their names, we always head the list with 'Spring,' though the almanac stubbornly insists on putting January first. We (perhaps unconsciously) recognise reserves of life in this preference. Man naturally looks forward, not back. The spring (especially ours), more often than not, comes with a sharp edge, and yet we always put it at the head of the meteorological poll. Though the seeds of future harvests may not have begun to sprout, they are there, in the ground, waiting for the signal to grow, for orders to march out and cover the field in which man yearly wages his battle with hunger. There is a significant agreement in hopefulness and indomitable pugnacity in this fixing upon the spring with which to start when we repeat the formula of sequence which expresses the four seasons. The sensuous or greedy man might prefer to begin with that in which we reap our crops, and have something tangible to speak of. And yet that comes last but one, last before all the forces of nature have gone through their summer manœuvres, or annual campaign, and retire to winter quarters. There would at once be felt a little shock of dislocation if a man were to talk of the 'seasons' as 'autumn, winter, spring, and summer.' Something more than a cadence of words which fits the tongue is felt in the accepted order in which we place the routine of the

year. We begin with the 'spring,' when all life is as yet unfulfilled, but full of hope; when the first fruits of resurrection are being felt, and more than the unseeing eye perceives may be seen in the primrose on the bank, when we watch the soft blade pushing itself through the hard earth without being bruised in so doing, or prepare the seed-bed for that which is to follow in its turn. All this helps to mitigate the vexation with which in March or April we look at the weathercock (though such a verification of facts is generally superfluous) and see that the wind is still in the north-east. We are disappointed for the day, but know that a good time is coming, and must shortly come. And that is a wholesome frame of mind, however brought about.

We pass into another as the seasonable weather of June and July begins to make itself felt. Then we are conscious of some reaction. The heat comes. Toil is exhaustive. We seek the shade. The long day brings longer hours of labour. Rest is not so appropriate when light gives glaring opportunities for work. The rapid progress of the summer makes imperative demands upon the husbandman to keep pace with it. A warmer sun ripens obnoxious weeds as well as the kindly fruits of the earth. Growth is around us and incessant. The expectation of spring is succeeded by the importunity of fruition. Though the final ingathering of autumn has not arrived, much produce makes its appearance which requires immediate attention. The gardener is especially active in the bedding and culture of his flowers, the sowing and thinning of his successive vegetable crops and their subsequent plucking or selling. He is busied, moreover, in the gathering of his strawberries, currants, and the like. He must lose no time over these perishable fruits. Then, too, the farmer is specially engaged. There is, *e.g.*, the hay-harvest, which precedes that of the corn, and is accompanied by, perhaps, even greater anxieties than the later reaping of the wheat. Poetical and idle people who talk about the scents and beauty of the clover, humming with the industry of a million bees, or the artist who sketches the brown-armed mower as, like Time, with steady strides and hissing scythe, he sweeps down the helpless grass, and the conventional maidens who toss it in the sweet air (though this business is mostly done now with cunningly forked revolving machines of unsentimental iron), little appreciate the concern with which the farmer taps his barometer, watches an ominous change of wind, which has a trick of 'backing' at the wrong time,

or sighs (possibly does something else beginning with an 's') as he sees beautiful water-bearing clouds pile themselves up on the horizon and creep together in the sky. The weather may be 'seasonable,' but it is 'catchy,' and a day's rain, which makes the country side smell sweetly in the nostrils of a townsman, may check the whole promising procedure of a week, and change the crop (which to the agriculturist means a balance at his bank) into a result as useless as a dishonoured or counterfeit note. Instead of being packed into a valuable haystack it may even have to be carted into the muckyard, where that which was to have been their winter food is trodden down uneaten by the feet of heedless cattle. It is a matter of yearly surprise to me that more farmers do not avail themselves of the method, now well known, by which grass may be safely stored for fodder as fast as it is cut. I refer to ensilage. The process is by no means a necessarily expensive one. I know that there is ingenious machinery whereby the succulent newly-mown tares or sainfoin may be pressed in the silo or the stack, but it is costly, and thus, though effective, takes off the value of the result. You can always get a sovereign if you will pay a guinea for it, but dear implements may lead to a poor return, however successfully the crop may be housed. In the making of ensilage, however, there need be no great preliminary outlay. I do not speak idly, having proved my words. A few years ago I had a pit, like a large grave, dug in chalk soil. It was some six feet deep, four wide, and twelve long. While our neighbours were mourning over or growling at a wet June, I had this hole filled with mixed clover and other grass. It was a drizzly day, and thus the stuff was carted, not merely green from the field, just as it was cut, but also damp with rain. We used no weights, only stamping the fresh-cut hay down, and then piling on it the earth which had been dug out of the hole. This was filled up, as the grass settled, two or three times, and then the grave was left untouched till the following year. I believe that the men employed in the business thought me more than foolish to 'waste' so much good fodder, and I learnt that the odds in the village betting were heavily against me. 'He won't find,' said the experts, 'northin' but a lot of owd muck.' At last the month of March came, and in the presence of chosen witnesses we opened the grave. Every blade of the buried grass was changed into excellent ensilage which the cows and horses ate readily. This last year I made another similar primitive silo, or

rather enlarged the old one (for such a grass tomb as I have described serves over and over again), and the result was especially valuable in a late spring when no blade had grown, and turnips had been injured by the winter frost.

Thus the farmer might smile at the showers which now make him frown, and, however wet the hay time, find it 'seasonable weather.' Indeed, an especially damp month which makes the grass crop abundant (and yet renders the storing of it uncertain if treated in the usual way) rather adds to, than detracts from, the amount and value of the result when it is disposed of as I have said. But the moods in which we meet and judge the weather are as varied as the seasons themselves. One man is almost sure to want what another dreads, and so difficult is it for any farmer, however selfish and indifferent to the needs of his neighbours, to be sure of what he desires that it has been often said he would grumble just as much if he had the sun in one hand and a watering-pot in the other. And this perversity of dissatisfaction must not be imputed to him for evil, since, in fact, the requirements of a summer crop within the circle of the same farm are not merely varied, but often antagonistic. That which is fatal to the water-loving herbage, or even to barley and oats, is life to the wheat. Do all my readers know why? I will tell them. A grain of wheat is not content with that with which it finds near the surface of the soil which has been duly prepared for its growth. The field is ploughed, harrowed, weeded, manured, and sown. All that the farmer can do for the seed is done. But the grain of wheat sends a filament no thicker than the spoke of a cobweb down into the ground some three, four, or even five feet, and through this tender tap-root sucks up what moisture it needs from the stores beneath which are unaffected by the sun's rays. Thus a drought which can burn up the shallow-rooted barley does not affect the seed which represents the staff of life. This rejoices in the fiercest heat that ever bakes the surface of an English field. The hottest summer produces the best wheat-crop. It is thus, by the way, also with the oak. Unlike some other trees, this has a central descending root, which taps the moisture unreached by them. While their leaves faint in the sultry downpour, those of the oak are fresh and green. Thus it is with wheat, which thrives when other corn-crops suffer. The American farmers alone, who cover great areas with it, have unmixed satisfaction at that 'seasonable weather' which we conventionally associate with summer heat.

The Californian, *e.g.*, can calculate on six months or more of hot unbroken sunshine, and smiles at the vexation which comes to the man who grows a mixed produce in his fields, but never finds a time which suits them all alike. His whole crop succeeds, and he sows the same year after year. We must not wonder at or blame the shortness of temper which is shown by the Englishman with his provoking samples of weather.

Its uncertain variety, moreover, produces irritating results in other ways. Few houses, *e.g.*, are equipped with provision against that heat which is certain and prolonged elsewhere, as, say, in India. But periods of dog-day sultriness sometimes arrive in which every householder wishes he had a 'punkah,' when there is not a breath of moving air, and the opening of windows only makes his rooms the hotter. The secret of a cool house is seldom then realised. The best plan is to open every casement in the night, and then close them before the sun has power to heat the surrounding atmosphere. Thus a body of coolness is trapped, and cut off from being affected by an August sun. Let me here pause to account for the general access of warmth which then arrives. While the fields are covered by the corn-crop the surface of the soil is shaded, but when this is laid bare by the reaping of the harvest, it is exposed to the sun's rays, and, becoming hot, lends its heat to the air itself. Hence, probably, comes the rise in, or nature of, the temperature which characterises autumn.

This season, indeed, has its peculiar charms. Alone in the routine of the year it has its atmosphere of fruition. The hopes of the spring have been fulfilled or denied. There is no longer any doubt about results. The toils of the summer, when the husbandman runs his race with annual growth, have been finished off with the supreme effort of harvest. A time has come which, years out of mind, is given to a parenthesis of rejoicing and repose. Though the anxious farmer, who is beginning to hoe his turnips and to make provision for the September plough, may not always sing the harvest hymn, 'All is safely gathered in, ere the winter storms begin' with an unmixed abandonment to the spirit of joyfulness, an interval of gladness or relaxation asserts itself. Holidays come. Tourists go about 'seeking rest,' and often, like evil spirits, 'finding none.' Garden-parties bloom with the autumnal bonnet. Partridges are harassed, sportsmen weary, and keepers tipped. Then, too, a prodigious assimilation of harvest-suppers comes to pass, as the sunburnt peasant in his Sunday clothes sits

down to a weekday feast, sings the long-drawn traditional songs of ingathering, smokes the long new clay, and rattles the empty mug, soon refilled, upon the board, in passing contentment and applause. Then, too, the trees deck themselves in transient colour before they undress for their winter sleep, as if, their yearly duty being done, they liked to add special decoration to a period of rest. There is no more pleasantly 'seasonable weather' than that which mostly comes somewhere in the month of September, when the bulk of the twelve months' work is done, and nature pauses to await the advent of the coming frosts. Chill October has not yet cooled the summer air, though the yellowing or reddened leaves already speckle the lawn, the swallows begin to hold converse about return, and another log is thrown upon the freshly-lighted evening fire.

Many profess to feel a saddened spirit as the warm year dies down and the flowers wither, but really the departure of autumn and the close of holidays ought to be associated with the freshest sense of renewed intellectual vitality. It is true that we are not then moved by that sentiment of expectation which marks the spring, but the rest has been had, and October becomes the true starting-point of the brain-work of the year. Then colleges and schools open their classes afresh, and the writer dips his pen with a hand browned on the hill-side or the sea, and with a reserve of bodily strength which is needed as much for the chamber as the field. The long vacation is over, and the familiar desk, which had come to be almost loathed at the end of dusty summer, renews its welcome look. Here indeed absence makes the heart grow fonder, and no one is more ready to greet the study-fire than the man who, two months before, had yearned to get away. To come back to one's own home, feel on rising in the morning that the hair-brushes and other toggery of the dressing-table have not to be packed up for the daily flitting, that dinners may be eaten and sleeps slept without subsequent mention of a bill, makes the approach of winter independent of 'seasonable weather.' We don't much care what it is when we have once again put the ice-axe and iron-nailed boots away in their cupboard, sent the pug-garee to be washed, and locked the passport up in a drawer. It is when the nights have begun to be long, and yet, however dark, all (in town) independent of the moon; when weary country drives are ill rewarded by country cooks, and yet people have not 'come up' for their yearly urban business or entertainment, that we

begin to ask ourselves whether the seasons of fashion are rightly fitted to those of nature. Unfashionable people already defy the canons of society. By common consent autumn is the time of holidays, when thousands below the upper ten exchange country and town sensations: for, while London, *e.g.*, is emptied of all residents who can get away, perhaps only for a week, uncounted provincial excursionists fill the theatres and saunter through the parks. The face of the Oxford Street procession is then changed. The houses of the rich are empty, but the pavements of the wayfarers are filled. People who are 'out of town' have little idea of the numbers who visit it while they are away. The tanned faces, unmistakably country-made clothes, and serviceable boots which may then be seen in growing numbers every year by anyone who watches the great metropolitan thoroughfares, belong to excursive 'provincials.' They don't come for long, but they tire their feet on the hot pavement, sit squarely in omnibuses, and go to the play with expectant smiles, as surely as the autumn comes round. Now, their visitation of it, at a time when the town is talked of as empty, suggests the reflection that London is enjoyable even when it is said to be most repulsive and deserted. No one wants the 'season' to be held in August, but why should not the time of fashion be shifted from the best part of summer to the worst part of winter, when the country roads are dark, but the city streets are lighted? Why should not January be made gay in cities, and the beauties of June be seen at their own time and in their own place? Of course the answer is not far to seek. There are no foxes in Kensington, nor pheasants in Hyde Park. And as to the flowers of the field and garden, who cares to see and smell them in their homes when there is nothing to be done in the way of killing anything, except perhaps trout, when the fly is 'on'? Spring is a 'close time' for all sanguinary sport, and (beside hay-fever) there is nothing to be caught in early summer. So the representatives of fashion spend the dull winter away from the illuminated streets, and in the glaring June sunshine display powdered complexions which would have passed muster under gaslight. So perverse are they, on the lowest grounds, in dislocating the seasonableness of the year.

In talking about the weather one is conscious of being started on a road which has no end. Everybody has naturally something to say about it every day. It is, here, full of surprises, and the subject of inexhaustible conjecture. It exercises the shepherd

and baffles the prophet. Our conduct of life, our judgment of the world is more dependent upon the height of the mercury and direction of the wind than many doctors and divines would allow. The state of the sky rules the procedure of man upon the earth. It is the 'deluge' which marks the earliest record of Almighty Nemesis, and the 'sun' which illustrates the excellence of righteousness and revelation. The mere thought of 'seasonable weather,' moreover, opens our minds to the perception of fitness and choice in using the manifold opportunities which are provided in our course. As the farmer makes hay while the sun shines, so in a hundred ways we are called to watch for and use openings for action of any kind, or hold our hands in the presence of signs that are ominous. The uncertainty of the weather, too, suggests the caution with which we forecast the possibilities of the future, and has created the maxim of the thrifty man who lays up against a rainy day. What I have said only touches the fringe of comment which it suggests, but of all subjects none are perhaps more prolific in the lessons of life than the weather, which in the main is always seasonable, but in the perception of which depends to a greater extent than many like to admit the success of our work, whether it be in providing the food of man, or illustrating that just judgment which is required in whatever we have to do.

THE WHITE COMPANY.

BY A. CONAN DOYLE,

AUTHOR OF 'MICAH CLARKE.'

CHAPTER XXI.

HOW AGOSTINO PISANO RISKED HIS HEAD.

EVEN the squires' table at the Abbey of St. Andrew's at Bordeaux was on a very sumptuous scale while the prince held his court there. Here first, after the meagre fare of Beaulieu and the stinted board of the Lady Loring, Alleyne learned the lengths to which luxury and refinement might be pushed. Roasted peacocks, with the feathers all carefully replaced, so that the bird lay upon the dish even as it had strutted in life, boars' heads with the tusks gilded and the mouth lined with silver foil, jellies in the shape of the Twelve Apostles, and a great pasty which formed an exact model of the king's new castle at Windsor—these were a few of the strange dishes which faced him. An archer had brought him a change of clothes from the cog, and he had already, with the elasticity of youth, shaken off the troubles and fatigues of the morning. A page from the inner banqueting-hall had come with word that their master intended to drink wine at the lodgings of the Lord Chandos that night, and that he desired his squires to sleep at the hotel of the 'Half Moon,' on the Rue des Apôtres. Thither, then, they both set out in the twilight after the long course of juggling tricks and glee-singing with which the principal meal was concluded.

A thin rain was falling as the two youths, with their cloaks over their heads, made their way on foot through the streets of the old town, leaving their horses in the royal stables. An occasional oil lamp at the corner of a street, or in the portico of some wealthy burgher, threw a faint glimmer over the shining cobble-stones and the varied motley crowd who, in spite of the weather, ebbed and flowed along every highway. In those scattered circles of dim radiance might be seen the whole busy panorama of life in a wealthy and martial city. Here passed the round-faced burgher, swollen with prosperity, his sweeping dark-clothed gaberdine, flat

velvet cap, broad leather belt and dangling pouch all speaking of comfort and of wealth. Behind him his serving-wench, her blue wimple over her head, and one hand thrust forth to bear the lanthorn which threw a golden bar of light along her master's path. Behind them a group of swaggering half-drunken Yorkshire dalesmen, speaking a dialect which their own southland countrymen could scarce comprehend, their jerkins marked with the pelican, which showed that they had come over in the train of the north-country Stapletons. The burgher glanced back at their fierce faces and quickened his step, while the girl pulled her wimple closer round her; for there was a meaning in their wild eyes, as they stared at the purse and the maiden, which men of all tongues could understand. Then came archers of the guard, shrill-voiced women of the camp, English pages with their fair skins and blue wondering eyes, dark-robed friars, lounging men-at-arms, swarthy loud-tongued Gascon serving-men, seamen from the river, rude peasants of the Médoc, and becloaked and befeathered squires of the court, all jostling and pushing in an ever-changing many-coloured stream; while English, French, Welsh, Basque, and the varied dialects of Gascony and Guienne filled the air with their babel. From time to time the throng would be burst asunder and a lady's horse-litter would trot past towards the abbey, or there would come a knot of torch-bearing archers walking in front of Gascon baron or English knight, as he sought his lodgings after the palace revels. Clatter of hoofs, clinking of weapons, shouts from the drunken brawlers and high laughter of women, they all rose up, like the mist from a marsh, out of the crowded streets of the dim-lit city.

One couple out of the moving throng especially engaged the attention of the two young squires, the more so as they were going in their own direction and immediately in front of them. They consisted of a man and a girl, the former very tall with rounded shoulders, a limp of one foot, and a large flat object covered with dark cloth under his arm. His companion was young and straight, with a quick elastic step and graceful bearing, though so swathed in a black mantle that little could be seen of her face save a flash of dark eyes and a curve of raven hair. The tall man leaned heavily upon her to take the weight off his tender foot, while he held his burden betwixt himself and the wall, cuddling it jealously to his side, and thrusting forward his young companion to act as a buttress whenever the pressure of the crowd threatened to bear him away.

The evident anxiety of the man, the appearance of his attendant, and the joint care with which they defended their concealed possession, excited the interest of the two young Englishmen who walked within hand-touch of them.

'Courage, child!' they heard the tall man exclaim in strange hybrid French. 'If we can win another sixty paces we are safe.'

'Hold it safe, father,' the other answered, in the same soft, mincing dialect. 'We have no cause for fear.'

'Verily, they are heathens and barbarians,' cried the man; 'mad, howling, drunken barbarians! Forty more paces, Tita mia, and I swear to the holy Eloi, patron of all learned craftsmen, that I will never set foot over my door again until the whole swarm are safely hived in their camp of Dax, or wherever else they curse with their presence. Twenty more paces, my treasure! Ah, my God! how they push and brawl! Get in their way, Tita mia! Put your little elbow bravely out! Set your shoulders squarely against them, girl! Why should you give way to these mad islanders? Ah, cospetto! we are ruined and destroyed!'

The crowd had thickened in front, so that the lame man and the girl had come to a stand. Several half-drunken English archers, attracted, as the squires had been, by their singular appearance, were facing towards them, and peering at them through the dim light.

'By the three kings!' cried one, 'here is an old dotard shrew to have so goodly a crutch! Use the leg that God hath given you, man, and do not bear so heavily upon the wench.'

'Twenty devils fly away with him!' shouted another. 'What, how, man! are brave archers to go maidless while an old man uses one as a walking-staff?'

'Come with me, my honey-bird!' cried a third, plucking at the girl's mantle.

'Nay, with me, my heart's desire!' said the first. 'By St. George! our life is short, and we should be merry while we may. May I never see Chester Bridge again, if she is not a right winsome lass!'

'What hath the old toad under his arm?' cried one of the others. 'He hugs it to him as the devil hugged the pardoner.'

'Let us see, old bag of bones; let us see what it is that you have under your arm!' They crowded in upon him, while he, ignorant of their language, could but clutch the girl with one hand

and the parcel with the other, looking wildly about in search of help.

'Nay, lads, nay!' cried Ford, pushing back the nearest archer. 'This is but scurvy conduct. Keep your hands off, or it will be the worse for you.'

'Keep your tongue still, or it will be the worse for you,' shouted the most drunken of the archers. 'Who are you to spoil sport?'

'A raw squire, new landed,' said another. 'By St. Thomas of Kent! we are at the beck of our master, but we are not to be ordered by every babe whose mother hath sent him as far as Aquitaine.'

'Oh, gentlemen,' cried the girl in broken French, 'for dear Christ's sake stand by us, and do not let these terrible men do us an injury.'

'Have no fears, lady,' Alleyne answered. 'We shall see that all is well with you. Take your hand from the girl's wrist, you north-country rogue!'

'Hold to her, Wat!' said a great black-bearded man-at-arms, whose steel breast-plate glimmered in the dusk. 'Keep your hands from your bodkins, you two, for that was my trade before you were born, and, by God's soul! I will drive a handful of steel through you if you move a finger.'

'Thank God!' said Alleyne suddenly, as he spied in the lamplight a shock of blazing red hair which fringed a steel cap high above the heads of the crowd. 'Here is John, and Aylward, too! Help us, comrades, for there is wrong being done to this maid and to the old man.'

'Holà, mon petit,' said the old bowman, pushing his way through the crowd, with the huge forester at his heels. 'What is all this, then? By the twang of string! I think that you will have some work upon your hands if you are to right all the wrongs that you may see upon this side of the water. It is not to be thought that a troop of bowmen, with the wine buzzing in their ears, will be as soft-spoken as so many young clerks in an orchard. When you have been a year with the Company you will think less of such matters. But what is amiss here? The provost-marshal with his archers is coming this way, and some of you may find yourselves in the stretch-neck, if you take not heed.'

'Why, it is old Sam Aylward of the White Company!' shouted the man-at-arms. 'Why, Samkin, what hath come upon thee? I

can call to mind the day when you were as roaring a blade as ever called himself a free companion. By my soul! from Limoges to Navarre, who was there who would kiss a wench or cut a throat as readily as bowman Aylward of Hawkwood's company?'

'Like enough, Peter,' said Aylward, 'and, by my hilt! I may not have changed so much. But it was ever a fair loose and a clear mark with me. The wench must be willing, or the man must be standing up against me, else, by these ten finger bones! either were safe enough for me.'

A glance at Aylward's resolute face, and at the huge shoulders of Hordle John, had convinced the archers that there was little to be got by violence. The girl and the old man began to shuffle on in the crowd without their tormentors venturing to stop them. Ford and Alleyne followed slowly behind them, but Aylward caught the latter by the shoulder.

'By my hilt! camarade,' said he, 'I hear that you have done great things at the Abbey to-day, but I pray you to have a care, for it was I who brought you into the Company, and it would be a black day for me if aught were to befall you.'

'Nay, Aylward, I will have a care.'

'Thrust not forward into danger too much, mon petit. In a little time your wrist will be stronger and your cut more shrewd. There will be some of us at the "Rose de Guienne" to-night, which is two doors from the hotel of the "Half Moon," so if you would drain a cup with a few simple archers you will be right welcome.'

Alleyne promised to be there if his duties would allow, and then, slipping through the crowd, he rejoined Ford, who was standing in talk with the two strangers, who had now reached their own doorstep.

'Brave young signor,' cried the tall man, throwing his arms round Alleyne, 'how can we thank you enough for taking our parts against those horrible drunken barbarians? What should we have done without you? My Tita would have been dragged away, and my head would have been shivered into a thousand fragments.'

'Nay, I scarce think that they would have mishandled you so,' said Alleyne in surprise.

'Ho, ho!' cried he with a high crowing laugh, 'it is not the head upon my shoulders that I think of. Cospetto! no. It is the head under my arm which you have preserved.'

'Perhaps the signori would deign to come under our roof, father,' said the maiden. 'If we bide here, who knows that some fresh tumult may not break out.'

'Well said, Tita! Well said, my girl! I pray you, sirs, to honour my unworthy roof so far. A light, Giacomo! There are five steps up. Now two more. So! Here we are at last in safety. Corpo di Baccho! I would not have given ten maravedi for my head when those children of the devil were pushing us against the wall. Tita mia, you have been a brave girl, and it was better that you should be pulled and pushed than that my head should be broken.'

'Yes indeed, father,' said she earnestly.

'But those English! Ach! Take a Goth, a Hun, and a Vandal; mix them together and add a Barbary rover; then take this creature and make him drunk—and you have an Englishman. My God! were ever such people upon earth? What place is free from them? I hear that they swarm in Italy even as they swarm here. Everywhere you will find them, except in heaven.'

'Dear father,' cried Tita, still supporting the angry old man, as he limped up the curved oaken stair. 'You must not forget that these good signori who have preserved us are also English.'

'Ah, yes. My pardon, sirs! Come into my room here. There are some who might find some pleasure in these paintings, but I learn that the art of war is the only art which is held in honour in your island.'

The low-roofed, oak-panelled room into which he conducted them was brilliantly lighted by four scented oil lamps. Against the walls, upon the table, on the floor, and in every part of the chamber were great sheets of glass painted in the most brilliant colours. Ford and Edricson gazed around them in amazement, for never had they seen such magnificent works of art.

'You like them, then,' the lame artist cried, in answer to the look of pleasure and of surprise in their faces. 'There are, then, some of you who have a taste for such trifling.'

'I could not have believed it,' exclaimed Alleyne. 'What colour! What outlines! See to this martyrdom of the holy Stephen, Ford. Could you not yourself pick up one of these stones which lie to the hand of the wicked murtherers?'

'And see this stag, Alleyne, with the cross betwixt its horns.

By my faith! I have never seen a better one at the Forest of Bere.'

'And the green of this grass—how bright and clear! Why, all the painting that I have seen is but child's play beside this. This worthy gentleman must be one of those great painters of whom I have oft heard brother Bartholomew speak in the old days at Beaulieu.'

The dark mobile face of the artist shone with pleasure at the unaffected delight of the two young Englishmen. His daughter had thrown off her mantle and disclosed a face of the finest and most delicate Italian beauty, which soon drew Ford's eyes from the pictures in front of him. Alleyne, however, continued with little cries of admiration and of wonderment to turn from the walls to the table and yet again to the walls.

'What think you of this, young sir?' asked the painter, tearing off the cloth which concealed the flat object which he had borne beneath his arm. It was a leaf-shaped sheet of glass bearing upon it a face with a halo round it, so delicately outlined, and of so perfect a tint, that it might have been indeed a human face which gazed with sad and thoughtful eyes upon the young squire. He clapped his hands, with that thrill of joy which true art will ever give to a true artist.

'It is great!' he cried. 'It is wonderful! But I marvel, sir, that you should have risked a work of such beauty and value by bearing it at night through so unruly a crowd.'

'I have indeed been rash,' said the artist. 'Some wine, Tita, from the Florence flask! Had it not been for you, I tremble to think of what might have come of it. See to the skin tint: it is not to be replaced; for paint as you will, it is not once in a hundred times that it is not either burned too brown in the furnace or else the colour will not hold, and you get but a sickly white. There you can see the very veins and the throb of the blood. Yes, diavolo! if it had broken my heart would have broken too. It is for the choir window in the church of St. Remy, and we had gone, my little helper and I, to see if it was indeed of the size for the stone-work. Night had fallen ere we finished, and what could we do save carry it home as best we might? But you, young sir, you speak as if you too knew something of the art.'

'So little that I scarce dare speak of it in your presence,' Alleyne answered. 'I have been cloister-bred, and it was no

very great matter to handle the brush better than my brother novices.'

'There are pigments, brush, and paper,' said the old artist. 'I do not give you glass, for that is another matter, and takes much skill in the mixing of colours. Now I pray you to show me a touch of your art. I thank you, Tita! The Venetian glasses, cara mia, and fill them to the brim. A seat, signor!'

While Ford, in his English-French, was conversing with Tita in her Italian-French, the old man was carefully examining his precious head to see that no scratch had been left upon its surface. When he glanced up again, Alleyne had, with a few bold strokes of the brush, tinted in a woman's face and neck upon the white sheet in front of him.

'Diavolo!' exclaimed the old artist, standing with his head on one side, 'you have power; yes, cospetto! you have power. It is the face of an angel!'

'It is the face of the Lady Maude Loring!' cried Ford, even more astonished.

'Why, on my faith, it is not unlike her!' said Alleyne, in some confusion.

'Ah! a portrait! So much the better. Young man, I am Agostino Pisano, the son of Andrea Pisano, and I say again that you have power. Further, I say that, if you will stay with me, I will teach you all the secrets of the glass-stainers' mystery: the pigments and their thickening, which will fuse into the glass and which will not, the furnace and the glazing—every trick and method you shall know.'

'I would be right glad to study under such a master,' said Alleyne; 'but I am sworn to follow my lord while this war lasts.'

'War! war!' cries the old Italian. 'Ever this talk of war. And the men that you hold to be great—what are they? Have I not heard their names? Soldiers, butchers, destroyers! Ah, par Baccho! we have men in Italy who are in very truth great. You pull down, you despoil; but they build up, they restore. Ah, if you could but see my own dear Pisa, the duomo, the cloisters of Campo Santo, the high campanile, with the mellow throb of her bells upon the warm Italian air! Those are the works of great men. And I have seen them with my own eyes, these very eyes which look upon you. I have seen Andrea Orcagna, Taddeo Gaddi, Giottino, Stefano, Simone Memmi—men whose very colours I am not worthy to mix. And I have seen the aged Giotto, and

he in turn was pupil to Cimabue, before whom there was no art in Italy, for the Greeks were brought to paint the chapel of the Gondi at Florence. Ah, signori, there are the real great men whose names will be held in honour when your soldiers are shown to have been the enemies of human kind.'

'Faith, sir,' said Ford, 'there is something to say for the soldiers also, for, unless they be defended, how are all these gentlemen whom you have mentioned to preserve the pictures which they have painted?'

'And all these?' said Alleyne. 'Have you indeed done them all?—and where are they to go?'

'Yes, signor, they are all from my hand. Some are, as you see, upon one sheet, and some are in many pieces which may fasten together. There are some who do but paint upon the glass, and then, by placing another sheet of glass upon the top and fastening it, they keep the air from their painting. Yet I hold that the true art of my craft lies as much in the furnace as in the brush. See this rose window, which is from the model of the Church of the Holy Trinity at Vendôme, and this other of the "Finding of the Grail," which is for the apse of the Abbey church. Time was when none but my countrymen could do these things; but there is Clement of Chartres and others in France who are very worthy workmen. But, ah! there is that ever shrieking brazen tongue which will not let us forget for one short hour that it is the arm of the savage, and not the hand of the master, which rules over the world.'

A stern clear bugle call had sounded close at hand to summon some following together for the night.

'It is a sign to us as well,' said Ford. 'I would fain stay here for ever amid all these beautiful things'—staring hard at the blushing Tita as he spoke—'but we must be back at our lord's hostel ere he reach it.'

Amid renewed thanks and with promises to come again, the two squires bade their leave of the old Italian glass-stainer and his daughter. The streets were clearer now, and the rain had stopped, so they made their way quickly from the Rue du Roi, in which their new friends dwelt, to the Rue des Apôtres, where the hostel of the 'Half Moon' was situated.

CHAPTER XXII.

HOW THE BOWMEN HELD WASSAIL AT THE 'ROSE DE GUIENNE.'

'Mon Dieu! Alleyne, saw you ever so lovely a face?' cried Ford as they hurried along together. 'So pure, so peaceful, and so beautiful!'

'In sooth, yes. And the hue of the skin the most perfect that ever I saw. Marked you also how the hair curled round the brow? It was wonder fine.'

'Those eyes too!' cried Ford. 'How clear and how tender—simple, and yet so full of thought!'

'If there was a weakness it was in the chin,' said Alleyne.

'Nay, I saw none.'

'It was well curved, it is true.'

'Most daintily so.'

'And yet——'

'What then, Alleyne? Wouldst find flaw in the sun?'

'Well, bethink you, Ford, would not more power and expression have been put into the face by a long and noble beard?'

'Holy Virgin!' cried Ford, 'the man is mad. A beard on the face of little Tita!'

'Tita! Who spoke of Tita?'

'Who spoke of aught else?'

'It was the picture of St. Remy, man, of which I have been discoursing.'

'You are indeed,' cried Ford, laughing, 'a Goth, Hun, and Vandal, with all the other hard names which the old man called us. How could you think so much of a smear of pigments, when there was such a picture painted by the good God Himself in the very room with you? But who is this?'

'If it please you, sirs,' said an archer, running across to them, 'Aylward and others would be right glad to see you. They are within here. He bade me say to you that the Lord Loring will not need your service to-night, as he sleeps with the Lord Chandos.'

'By my faith!' said Ford, 'we do not need a guide to lead us to their presence.' As he spoke there came a roar of singing from the tavern upon the right, with shouts of laughter and stamping of feet. Passing under a low door, and down a stone-

flagged passage, they found themselves in a long narrow hall lighted up by a pair of blazing torches, one at either end. Trusses of straw had been thrown down along the walls, and reclining on them were some twenty or thirty archers, all of the Company, their steel caps and jacks thrown off, their tunics open, and their great limbs sprawling upon the clay floor. At every man's elbow stood his leathern black-jack of beer, while at the further end a hogshead with its end knocked in promised an abundant supply for the future. Behind the hogshead, on a half-circle of kegs, boxes, and rude settles, sat Aylward, John, Black Simon and three or four other leading men of the archers, together with Goodwin Hawtayne, the master-shipman, who had left his yellow cog in the river to have a last rouse with his friends of the Company. Ford and Alleyne took their seats between Aylward and Black Simon, without their entrance checking in any degree the hubbub which was going on.

'Ale, mes camarades?' cried the bowman, 'or shall it be wine? Nay, but ye must have the one or the other. Here, Jacques, thou limb of the devil, bring a bottrine of the oldest vernage, and see that you do not shake it. Hast heard the news?'

'Nay,' cried both the squires.

'That we are to have a brave tourney.'

'A tourney?'

'Ay, lads. For the Captal de Buch hath sworn that he will find five knights from this side of the water who will ride over any five Englishmen who ever threw leg over saddle; and Chandos hath taken up the challenge, and the prince hath promised a golden vase for the man who carries himself best, and all the court is in a buzz over it.'

'Why should the knights have all the sport?' growled Hordle John. 'Could they not set up five archers for the honour of Aquitaine and of Gascony?'

'Or five men-at-arms,' said Black Simon.

'But who are the English knights?' asked Hawtayne.

'There are three hundred and forty-one in the town,' said Aylward, 'and I hear that three hundred and forty cartels and defiances have already been sent in, the only one missing being Sir John Ravensholme, who is in his bed with the sweating sickness, and cannot set foot to ground.'

'I have heard of it from one of the archers of the guard,' cried

a bowman from among the straw; 'I hear that the prince wished to break a lance, but that Chandos would not hear of it, for the game is likely to be a rough one.'

'Then there is Chandos.'

'Nay, the prince would not permit it. He is to be marshal of the lists, with Sir William Felton and the Duc d'Armagnac. The English will be the Lord Audley, Sir Thomas Percy, Sir Thomas Wake, Sir William Beauchamp, and our own very good lord and leader.'

'Hurrah for him, and God be with him!' cried several. 'It is honour to draw string in his service.'

'So you may well say,' said Aylward. 'By my ten finger-bones! if you march behind the pennon of the five roses you are like to see all that a good bowman would wish to see. Ha! yes, mes garçons, you laugh, but, by my hilt! you may not laugh when you find yourselves where he will take you, for you can never tell what strange vow he may not have sworn to. I see that he has a patch over his eye, even as he had at Poictiers. There will come bloodshed of that patch, or I am the more mistaken.'

'How chanced it at Poictiers, good Master Aylward?' asked one of the younger archers, leaning upon his elbows, with his eyes fixed respectfully upon the old bowman's rugged face.

'Ay, Aylward, tell us of it,' cried Hordle John.

'Here is to old Samkin Aylward!' shouted several at the further end of the room, waving their black-jacks in the air.

'Ask him!' said Aylward modestly, nodding towards Black Simon. 'He saw more than I did. And yet, by the holy nails! there was not very much that I did not see either.'

'Ah, yes,' said Simon, shaking his head, 'it was a great day. I never hope to see such another. There were some fine archers who drew their last shaft that day. We shall never see better men, Aylward.'

'By my hilt! no. There was little Robby Withstaff, and Andrew Salblaster, and Wat Alspaye, who broke the neck of the German. Mon Dieu! what men they were! Take them how you would, at long butts or short, hoyles, rounds, or rovers, better bowmen never twirled a shaft over their thumb-nails.'

'But the fight, Aylward, the fight!' cried several impatiently.

'Let me fill my jack first, boys, for it is a thirsty tale. It was at the first fall of the leaf that the prince set forth, and he passed through Auvergne, and Berry, and Anjou, and Touraine.

In Auvergne the maids are kind, but the wines are sour. In Berry it is the women that are sour, but the wines are rich. Anjou, however, is a very good land for bowmen, for wine and women are all that heart could wish. In Touraine I got nothing save a broken pate, but at Vierzon I had a great good fortune, for I had a golden pyx from the minster, for which I afterwards got nine Genoan janes from the goldsmith in the Rue Mont Olive. From thence we went to Bourges, where I had a tunic of flame-coloured silk and a very fine pair of shoes with tassels of silk and drops of silver.'

'From a stall, Aylward?' asked one of the young archers.

'Nay, from a man's feet, lad. I had reason to think that he might not need them again, seeing that a thirty-inch shaft had feathered in his back.'

'And what then, Aylward?'

'On we went, coz, some six thousand of us, until we came to Issodun, and there again a very great thing befell.'

'A battle, Aylward?'

'Nay, nay; a greater thing than that. There is little to be gained out of a battle, unless one have the fortune to win a ransom. At Issodun I and three Welshmen came upon a house which all others had passed, and we had the profit of it to ourselves. For myself, I had a fine feather-bed—a thing which you will not see in a long day's journey in England. You have seen it, Alleyne, and you, John. You will bear me out that it is a noble bed. We put it on a sutler's mule, and bore it after the army. It was in my mind that I would lay it by until I came to start house of mine own, and I have it now in a very safe place near Lyndhurst.'

'And what then, master-bowman?' asked Hawtayne. 'By St. Christopher! it is indeed a fair and goodly life which you have chosen, for you gather up the spoil as a Warsash man gathers lobsters, without grace or favour from any man.'

'You are right, master-shipman,' said another of the older archers. 'It is an old bowyer's rede that the second feather of a fenny goose is better than the pinion of a tame one. Draw on, old lad, for I have come between you and the clout.'

'On we went then,' said Aylward, after a long pull at his black-jack. 'There were some six thousand of us, with the prince and his knights, and the feather-bed upon a sutler's mule in the centre. We made great havoc in Touraine, until we came into

Romorantin, where I chanced upon a gold chain and two bracelets of jasper, which were stolen from me the same day by a black-eyed wench from the Ardennes. Mon Dieu! there are some folk who have no fear of Domesday in them, and no sign of grace in their souls, for ever clutching and clawing at another man's chattels.'

'But the battle, Aylward, the battle!' cried several, amid a burst of laughter.

'I come to it, my young war-pups. Well, then, the King of France had followed us with fifty thousand men, and he made great haste to catch us, but when he had us he scarce knew what to do with us, for we were so drawn up among hedges and vineyards that they could not come nigh us, save by one lane. On both sides were archers, men-at-arms and knights behind, and in the centre the baggage, with my feather-bed upon a sutler's mule. Three hundred chosen knights came straight for it, and, indeed, they were very brave men, but such a drift of arrows met them that few came back. Then came the Germans, and they also fought very bravely, so that one or two broke through the archers and came as far as the feather-bed, but all to no purpose. Then out rides our own little hothead with the patch over his eye, and my Lord Audley with his four Cheshire squires, and a few others of like kidney, and after them went the prince and Chandos, and then the whole throng of us, with axe and sword, for we had shot away our arrows. Ma foi! it was a foolish thing, for we came forth from the hedges, and there was naught to guard the baggage had they ridden round behind us. But all went well with us, and the king was taken, and little Robby Withstaff and I fell in with a wain with twelve firkins of wine for the king's own table, and, by my hilt! if you ask me what happened after that, I cannot answer you, nor can little Robby Withstaff either.'

'And next day?'

'By my faith! we did not tarry long, but we hied back to Bordeaux, where we came in safety with the King of France and also the feather-bed. I sold my spoil, mes garçons, for as many gold-pieces as I could hold in my hufken, and for seven days I lit twelve wax candles upon the altar of Saint Andrew: for if you forget the blessed when things are well with you, they are very likely to forget you when you have need of them. I have a score of one hundred and nineteen pounds of wax against the holy Andrew, and, as he was a very just man, I doubt not that I shall have full weight and measure when I have most need of it.'

'Tell me, Master Aylward,' cried a young fresh-faced archer at the further end of the room, 'what was this great battle about?'

'Why, you jack-fool, what would it be about save who should wear the crown of France?'

'I thought that mayhap it might be as to who should have this feather-bed of thine.'

'If I come down to you, Silas, I may lay my belt across your shoulders,' Aylward answered, amid a general shout of laughter. 'But it is time young chickens went to roost when they dare cackle against their elders. It is late, Simon.'

'Nay, let us have another song.'

'Here is Arnold of Sowley will troll as good a stave as any man in the Company.'

'Nay, we have one here who is second to none,' said Hawtayne, laying his hand upon big John's shoulder. 'I have heard him on the cog with a voice like the wave upon the shore. I pray you, friend, to give us "The Bells of Milton," or, if you will, "The Franklin's Maid."'

Hordle John drew the back of his hand across his mouth, fixed his eyes upon the corner of the ceiling, and bellowed forth, in a voice which made the torches flicker, the southland ballad for which he had been asked:—

The franklin he hath gone to roam,
The franklin's maid she bides at home.
But she is cold and coy and staid,
And who may win the franklin's maid?

There came a knight of high renown
In bassinet and ciclatoun;
On bended knee full long he prayed:
He might not win the franklin's maid.

There came a squire so debonair,
His dress was rich, his words were fair,
He sweetly sang, he deftly played:
He could not win the franklin's maid.

There came a mercer wonder-fine
With velvet cap and gaberdine:
For all his ships, for all his trade,
He could not buy the franklin's maid.

There came an archer bold and true,
With bracer guard and stave of yew;
His purse was light, his jerkin frayed:
Haro, alas! the franklin's maid!

Oh, some have laughed and some have cried,
And some have scoured the country-side;
But off they ride through wood and glade,
The bowman and the franklin's maid.

A roar of delight from his audience, with stamping of feet and beating of black-jacks against the ground, showed how thoroughly the song was to their taste, while John modestly retired into a quart pot, which he drained in four giant gulps. 'I sang that ditty in Hordle ale-house ere I ever thought to be an archer myself,' quoth he.

'Fill up your stoups!' cried Black Simon, thrusting his own goblet into the open hogshead in front of him. 'Here is a last cup to the White Company, and every brave boy who walks behind the roses of Loring!'

'To the wood, the flax, and the gander's wing!' said an old grey-headed archer on the right.

'To a gentle loose, and the king of Spain for a mark at fourteen score!' cried another.

'To a bloody war!' shouted a fourth. 'Many to go and few to come!'

'With the most gold to the best steel!' added a fifth.

'And a last cup to the maids of our heart!' cried Aylward. 'A steady hand and a true eye, boys; so let two quarts be a bowman's portion.' With shout and jest and snatch of song they streamed from the room, and all was peaceful once more in the 'Rose de Guienne.'

CHAPTER XXIII.

HOW ENGLAND HELD THE LISTS AT BORDEAUX.

So used were the good burghers of Bordeaux to martial display and knightly sport, that an ordinary joust or tournament was an everyday matter with them. The fame and brilliancy of the prince's court had drawn the knights-errant and pursuivants-of-arms from every part of Europe. In the long lists by the Garonne on the landward side of the northern gate there had been many a strange combat, when the Teutonic knight, fresh from the conquest of the Prussian heathen, ran a course against the knight of Calatrava, hardened by continual struggle against the Moors, or cavaliers from Portugal broke a lance with Scandinavian warriors

from the further shore of the great Northern Ocean. Here fluttered many an outland pennon, bearing symbol and blazonry from the banks of the Danube, the wilds of Lithuania, and the mountain strongholds of Hungary: for chivalry was of no clime and of no race, nor was any land so wild that the fame and name of the prince had not sounded through it from border to border.

Great, however, was the excitement through town and district when it was learned that on the third Wednesday in Advent there would be held a passage-at-arms in which five knights of England would hold the lists against all comers. The great concourse of noblemen and famous soldiers, the national character of the contest, and the fact that this was a last trial of arms before what promised to be an arduous and bloody war, all united to make the event one of the most notable and brilliant that Bordeaux had ever seen. On the eve of the contest the peasants flocked in from the whole district of the Médoc, and the fields beyond the walls were whitened with the tents of those who could find no warmer lodging. From the distant camp of Dax, too, and from Blaye, Bourg, Libourne, St. Emilion, Castillon, St. Macaire, Cardillac, Ryons, and all the cluster of flourishing towns which look upon Bordeaux as their mother, there thronged an unceasing stream of horsemen and of footmen, all converging upon the great city. By the morning of the day on which the courses were to be run, not less than eighty thousand people had assembled round the lists and along the low grassy ridge which looks down upon the scene of the encounter.

It was, as may well be imagined, no easy matter among so many noted cavaliers to chose out five on either side who should have precedence over their fellows. A score of secondary combats had nearly arisen from the rivalries and bad blood created by the selection, and it was only the influence of the prince and the efforts of the older barons which kept the peace among so many eager and fiery soldiers. Not till the day before the courses were the shields finally hung out for the inspection of the ladies and the heralds, so that all men might know the names of the champions and have the opportunity to prefer any charge against them, should there be stain upon them which should disqualify them from taking part in so noble and honourable a ceremony.

Sir Hugh Calverley and Sir Robert Knolles had not yet returned from their raid into the marches of Navarre, so that the

English party were deprived of two of their most famous lances. Yet there remained so many good names that Chandos and Felton, to whom the selection had been referred, had many an earnest consultation, in which every feat of arms and failure or success of each candidate was weighed and balanced against the rival claims of his companions. Lord Audley of Cheshire, the hero of Poictiers, and Loring of Hampshire, who was held to be the second lance in the army, were easily fixed upon. Then, of the younger men, Sir Thomas Percy of Northumberland, Sir Thomas Wake of Yorkshire, and Sir William Beauchamp of Gloucestershire, were finally selected to uphold the honour of England. On the other side were the veteran Çaptal de Buch and the brawny Olivier de Clisson, with the free companion Sir Perducas d'Albert, the valiant Lord of Mucident, and Sigismond von Altenstadt, of the Teutonic order. The older soldiers among the English shook their heads as they looked upon the escutcheons of these famous warriors, for they were all men who had spent their lives upon the saddle, and bravery and strength can avail little against experience and wisdom of war.

'By my faith! Sir John,' said the prince as he rode through the winding streets on his way to the lists, 'I should have been glad to have splintered a lance to-day. You have seen me hold a spear since I had strength to lift one, and should know best whether I do not merit a place among this honourable company.'

'There is no better seat and no truer lance, sire,' said Chandos; 'but, if I may say so without fear of offence, it were not fitting that you should join in this debate.'

'And why, Sir John?'

'Because, sire, it is not for you to take part with Gascons against English, or with English against Gascons, seeing that you are lord of both. We are not too well loved by the Gascons now, and it is but the golden link of your princely coronet which holds us together. If that be snapped I know not what would follow.'

'Snapped, Sir John!' cried the prince, with an angry sparkle in his dark eyes. 'What manner of talk is this? You speak as though the allegiance of our people were a thing which might be thrown off or on like a falcon's jessel.'

'With a sorry hack one uses whip and spur, sire,' said Chandos; 'but with a horse of blood and spirit a good cavalier is gentle and soothing, coaxing rather than forcing. These folk are strange people, and you must hold their love, even as you have it now,

for you will get from their kindness what all the pennons in your army could not wring from them.'

'You are over-grave to-day, John,' the prince answered. 'We may keep such questions for our council-chamber. But how now, my brothers of Spain, and of Majorca, what think you of this challenge?'

'I look to see some handsome jousting,' said Don Pedro, who rode with the King of Majorca upon the right of the prince, while Chandos was on the left. 'By St. James of Compostella! but these burghers would bear some taxing. See to the broadcloth and velvet that the rogues bear upon their backs! By my troth! if they were my subjects they would be glad enough to wear falding and leather ere I had done with them. But mayhap it is best to let the wool grow long ere you clip it.'

'It is our pride,' the prince answered coldly, 'that we rule over freemen and not slaves.'

'Every man to his own humour,' said Pedro carelessly. 'Carajo! there is a sweet face at yonder window! Don Fernando, I pray you to mark the house, and to have the maid brought to us at the abbey.'

'Nay, brother, nay!' cried the prince impatiently. 'I have had occasion to tell you more than once that things are not ordered in this way in Aquitaine.'

'A thousand pardons, dear friend,' the Spaniard answered quickly, for a flush of anger had sprung to the dark cheek of the English prince. 'You make my exile so like a home that I forget at times that I am not in very truth back in Castile. Every land hath indeed its own ways and manners; but I promise you, Edward, that when you are my guest in Toledo or Madrid you shall not yearn in vain for any commoner's daughter on whom you may deign to cast your eye.'

'Your talk, sire,' said the prince still more coldly, 'is not such as I love to hear from your lips. I have no taste for such amours as you speak of, and I have sworn that my name shall be coupled with that of no woman save my ever dear wife.'

'Ever the mirror of true chivalry!' exclaimed Pedro, while James of Majorca, frightened at the stern countenance of their all-powerful protector, plucked hard at the mantle of his brother exile.

'Have a care, cousin,' he whispered; 'for the sake of the Virgin have a care, for you have angered him.'

'Pshaw! fear not,' the other answered in the same low tone.

'If I miss one stoop I will strike him on the next. Mark me else. Fair cousin,' he continued, turning to the prince, 'these be rare men-at-arms and lusty bowmen. It would be hard indeed to match them.'

'They have journeyed far, sire, but they have never yet found their match.'

'Nor ever will, I doubt not. I feel myself to be back upon my throne when I look at them. But tell me, dear coz, what shall we do next, when we have driven this bastard Henry from the kingdom which he hath filched?'

'We shall then compel the King of Aragon to place our good friend and brother James of Majorca upon the throne.'

'Noble and generous prince!' cried the little monarch.

'That done' said King Pedro, glancing out of the corners of his eyes at the young conqueror, 'we shall unite the forces of England, of Aquitaine, of Spain and of Majorca. It would be shame to us if we did not do some great deed with such forces ready to our hand.'

'You say truly, brother,' cried the prince, his eyes kindling at the thought. 'Methinks that we could not do anything more pleasing to Our Lady than to drive the heathen Moors out of the country.'

'I am with you, Edward, as true as hilt to blade. But, by St. James! we shall not let these Moors make mock at us from over the sea. We must take ship and thrust them from Africa.'

'By heaven, yes!' cried the prince. 'And it is the dream of my heart that our English pennons shall wave upon the Mount of Olives, and the lions and lilies float over the holy city.'

'And why not, dear coz? Your bowmen have cleared a path to Paris, and why not to Jerusalem? Once there, your arms might rest.'

'Nay, there is more to be done,' cried the prince, carried away by the ambitious dream. 'There is still the city of Constantine to be taken, and war to be waged against the Soldan of Damascus. And beyond him again there is tribute to be levied from the Cham of Tartary and from the kingdom of Cathay. Ha! John, what say you? Can we not go as far eastward as Richard of the Lion Heart?'

'Old John will bide at home, sire,' said the rugged soldier. 'By my soul! as long as I am seneschal of Aquitaine I will find enough to do in guarding the marches which you have entrusted

to me. It would be a blithe day for the King of France when he heard that the seas lay between him and us.'

'By my soul! John,' said the prince, 'I have never known you turn laggard before.'

'The babbling hound, sire, is not always the first at the mort,' the old knight answered.

'Nay, my true-heart! I have tried you too often not to know. But, by my soul! I have not seen so dense a throng since the day that we brought King John down Cheapside.'

It was indeed an enormous crowd which covered the whole vast plain from the line of vineyards to the river bank. From the northern gate the prince and his companions looked down at a dark sea of heads, brightened here and there by the coloured hoods of the women or by the sparkling head-pieces of archers and men-at-arms. In the centre of this vast assemblage the lists seemed but a narrow strip of green marked out with banners and streamers, while a gleam of white with a flutter of pennons at either end showed where the marquees were pitched which served as the dressing-rooms of the combatants. A path had been staked off from the city gate to the stands which had been erected for the court and the nobility. Down this, amid the shouts of the enormous multitude, the prince cantered with his two attendant kings, his high officers of state, and his long train of lords and ladies, courtiers, counsellors, and soldiers, with toss of plume and flash of jewel, sheen of silk and glint of gold—as rich and gallant a show as heart could wish. The head of the cavalcade had reached the lists ere the rear had come clear of the city gate, for the fairest and the bravest had assembled from all the broad lands which are watered by the Dordogne and the Garonne. Here rode dark-browed cavaliers from the sunny south, fiery soldiers from Gascony, graceful courtiers of Limousin or Saintonge, and gallant young Englishmen from beyond the seas. Here, too, were the beautiful brunettes of the Gironde, with eyes which outflashed their jewels, while beside them rode their blonde sisters of England, clear cut and aquiline, swathed in swans'-down and in ermine, for the air was biting though the sun was bright. Slowly the long and glittering train wound into the lists, until every horse had been tethered by the varlets in waiting, and every lord and lady seated in the long stands which stretched, rich in tapestry and velvet and blazoned arms, on either side of the centre of the arena.

The holders of the lists occupied the end which was nearest to the city gate. There, in front of their respective pavilions, flew the martlets of Audley, the roses of Loring, the scarlet bars of Wake, the lion of the Percys and the silver wings of the Beauchamps, each supported by a squire clad in hanging green stuff to represent so many Tritons, and bearing a huge conch-shell in their left hands. Behind the tents the great war-horses, armed at all points, champed and reared, while their masters sat at the doors of their pavilions, with their helmets upon their knees, chatting as to the order of the day's doings. The English archers and men-at-arms had mustered at that end of the lists, but the vast majority of the spectators were in favour of the attacking party, for the English had declined in popularity ever since the bitter dispute as to the disposal of the royal captive after the battle of Poictiers. Hence the applause was by no means general when the herald-at-arms proclaimed, after a flourish of trumpets, the names and styles of the knights who were prepared, for the honour of their country and for the love of their ladies, to hold the field against all who might do them the favour to run a course with them. On the other hand, a deafening burst of cheering greeted the rival herald, who, advancing from the other end of the lists, rolled forth the well-known titles of the five famous warriors who had accepted the defiance.

'Faith, John,' said the prince, 'it sounds as though you were right. Ha! my grace D'Armagnac, it seems that our friends on this side will not grieve if our English champions lose the day.'

'It may be so, sire,' the Gascon nobleman answered. 'I have little doubt that in Smithfield or at Windsor an English crowd would favour their own countrymen.'

'By my faith! that's easily seen,' said the prince, laughing, 'for a few score English archers at yonder end are bellowing as though they would out-shout the mighty multitude. I fear that they will have little to shout over this journey, for my gold vase has small prospect of crossing the water. What are the conditions, John?'

'They are to tilt singly not less than three courses, sire, and the victory to rest with that party which shall have won the greater number of courses, each pair continuing till one or other have the vantage. He who carries himself best of the victors hath the prize, and he who is judged best of the other party hath a jewelled clasp. Shall I order that the nakirs sound, sire?'

The prince nodded, and the trumpets rang out, while the champions rode forth one after the other, each meeting his opponent in the centre of the lists. Sir William Beauchamp went down before the practised lance of the Captal de Buch. Sir Thomas Percy won the vantage over the Lord of Mucident, and the Lord Audley struck Sir Perducas d'Albret from the saddle. The burly De Clisson, however, restored the hopes of the attackers by beating to the ground Sir Thomas Wake of Yorkshire. So far, there was little to choose betwixt challengers and challenged.

'By Saint James of Santiago!' cried Don Pedro, with a tinge of colour upon his pale cheeks, 'win who will, this has been a most noble contest.'

'Who comes next for England, John?' asked the prince in a voice which quivered with excitement.

'Sir Nigel Loring of Hampshire, sire.'

'Ha! he is a man of good courage, and skilled in the use of all weapons.'

'He is indeed, sire. But his eyes, like my own, are the worse for the wars. Yet he can tilt or play his part at hand-strokes as merrily as ever. It was he, sire, who won the golden crown which Queen Philippa, your royal mother, gave to be jousted for by all the knights of England after the harrying of Calais. I have heard that at Twynham Castle there is a buffet which groans beneath the weight of his prizes.'

'I pray that my vase may join them,' said the prince. 'But here is the cavalier of Germany, and, by my soul! he looks like a man of great valour and hardiness. Let them run their full three courses, for the issue is over great to hang upon one.'

As the prince spoke, amid a loud flourish of trumpets and the shouting of the Gascon party, the last of the assailants rode gallantly into the lists. He was a man of great size, clad in black armour without blazonry or ornament of any kind, for all worldly display was forbidden by the rules of the military brotherhood to which he belonged. No plume or nobloy fluttered from his plain tilting salade, and even his lance was devoid of the customary banderole. A white mantle fluttered behind him, upon the left side of which was marked the broad black cross picked out with silver which was the well-known badge of the Teutonic order. Mounted upon a horse as large, as black, and as forbidding as himself, he cantered slowly forward, with none of those prancings and gambades with which a cavalier was accustomed to show his

command over his charger. Gravely and sternly he inclined his head to the prince, and took his place at the further end of the arena.

He had scarce done so before Sir Nigel rode out from the holders' enclosure, and galloping at full speed down the lists, drew his charger up before the prince's stand with a jerk which threw it back upon its haunches. With white armour, blazoned shield, and plume of ostrich-feathers from his helmet, he carried himself in so jaunty and joyous a fashion, with tossing pennon and curvetting charger, that a shout of applause ran the full circle of the arena. With the air of a man who hastes to a joyous festival, he waved his lance in salute, and reining the pawing horse round without permitting its fore-feet to touch the ground, he hastened back to his station.

A great hush fell over the huge multitude as the two last champions faced each other. A double issue seemed to rest upon their contest, for their personal fame was at stake as well as their party's honour. Both were famous warriors, but as their exploits had been performed in widely sundered countries, they had never before been able to cross lances. A course between such men would have been enough in itself to cause the keenest interest, apart from its being the crisis which would decide who should be the victors of the day. For a moment they waited—the German sombre and collected, Sir Nigel quivering in every fibre with eagerness and fiery resolution. Then, amid a long-drawn breath from the spectators, the glove fell from the marshal's hand, and the two steel-clad horsemen met like a thunder-clap in front of the royal stand. The German, though he reeled for an instant before the thrust of the Englishman, struck his opponent so fairly upon the vizor that the laces burst, the plumed helmet flew to pieces, and Sir Nigel galloped on down the list with his bald head shimmering in the sunshine. A thousand waving scarves and tossing caps announced that the first bout had fallen to the popular party.

The Hampshire knight was not a man to be disheartened by a reverse. He spurred back to his pavilion, and was out in a few instants with another helmet. The second course was so equal that the keenest judges could not discern any vantage. Each struck fire from the other's shield, and each endured the jarring shock as though welded to the horse beneath him. In the final bout, however, Sir Nigel struck his opponent with so true an aim that the point of the lance caught between the bars of

his vizor and tore the front of his helmet out, while the German, aiming somewhat low, and half stunned by the shock, had the misfortune to strike his adversary upon the thigh, a breach of the rules of the tilting-yard, by which he not only sacrificed his chances of success, but would also have forfeited his horse and his armour, had the English knight chosen to claim them. A roar of applause from the English soldiers, with an ominous silence from the vast crowd who pressed round the barriers, announced that the balance of victory lay with the holders. Already the ten champions had assembled in front of the prince to receive his award, when a harsh bugle call from the further end of the lists drew all eyes to a new and unexpected arrival.

CHAPTER XXIV.

HOW A CHAMPION CAME FORTH FROM THE EAST.

THE Bordeaux lists were, as has already been explained, situated upon the plain near the river upon those great occasions when the tilting-ground in front of the Abbey of St. Andrew's was deemed to be too small to contain the crowd. On the eastern side of this plain the country-side sloped upwards, thick with vines in summer, but now ridged with the brown bare enclosures. Over the gently rising plain curved the white road which leads inland, usually flecked with travellers, but now with scarce a living form upon it, so completely had the lists drained all the district of its inhabitants. Strange it was to see so vast a concourse of people, and then to look upon that broad, white, empty highway which wound away, bleak and deserted, until it narrowed itself to a bare streak against the distant uplands.

Shortly after the contest had begun, anyone looking from the lists along this road might have remarked, far away in the extreme distance, two brilliant and sparkling points which glittered and twinkled in the bright shimmer of the winter sun. Within an hour these points had become clearer and nearer, until they might be seen to come from the reflection from the head-pieces of two horsemen who were riding at the top of their speed in the direction of Bordeaux. Another half-hour had brought them so close that every point of their bearing and equipment could be dis-

cerned. The first was a knight in full armour, mounted upon a brown horse with a white blaze upon breast and forehead. He was a short man of great breadth of shoulder, with vizor closed, and no blazonry upon his simple white surcoat or plain black shield. The other, who was evidently his squire and attendant, was unarmed save for the helmet upon his head, but bore in his right hand a very long and heavy oaken spear which belonged to his master. In his left hand the squire held not only the reins of his own horse but those of a great black war-horse, fully harnessed, which trotted along at his side. Thus the three horses and their two riders rode swiftly to the lists, and it was the blare of the trumpet sounded by the squire as his lord rode into the arena which had broken in upon the prize-giving and drawn away the attention and interest of the spectators.

'Ha, John!' cried the prince, craning his neck, 'who is this cavalier, and what is it that he desires?'

'On my word, sire,' replied Chandos, with the utmost surprise upon his face, 'it is my opinion that he is a Frenchman.'

'A Frenchman!' repeated Don Pedro. 'And how can you tell that, my Lord Chandos, when he has neither coat-armour, crest, nor blazonry?'

'By his armour, sire, which is rounder at elbow and at shoulder than any of Bordeaux or of England. Italian he might be were his bassinet more sloped, but I will swear that those plates were welded betwixt this and Rhine. Here comes his squire, however, and we shall hear what strange fortune hath brought him over the marches.'

As he spoke the attendant cantered up the grassy enclosure, and pulling up his steed in front of the royal stand, blew a second fanfare upon his bugle. He was a raw-boned, swarthy-cheeked man, with black bristling beard and a swaggering bearing. Having sounded his call, he thrust the bugle into his belt, and, pushing his way betwixt the groups of English and of Gascon knights, he reined up within a spear's length of the royal party.

'I come,' he shouted in a hoarse thick voice, with a strong Breton accent, 'as squire and herald from my master, who is a very valiant pursuivant-of-arms, and a liegeman to the great and powerful monarch, Charles, king of the French. My master has heard that there is jousting here, and prospect of honourable advancement, so he has come to ask that some English cavalier will vouchsafe for the love of his lady to run a course with sharpened

lances with him, or to meet him with sword, mace, battle-axe, or dagger. He bade me say, however, that he would fight only with a true Englishman, and not with any mongrel who is neither English nor French, but speaks with the tongue of the one, and fights under the banner of the other.'

'Sir!' cried De Clisson, with a voice of thunder, while his countrymen clapped their hands to their swords. The squire, however, took no notice of their angry faces, but continued with his master's message.

'He is now ready, sire,' he said, 'albeit his destrier has travelled many miles this day, and fast, for we were in fear lest we come too late for the jousting.'

'Ye have indeed come too late,' said the prince, 'seeing that the prize is about to be awarded; yet I doubt not that one of these gentlemen will run a course for the sake of honour with this cavalier of France.'

'And as to the prize, sire,' quoth Sir Nigel, 'I am sure that I speak for all when I say this French knight hath our leave to bear it away with him if he can fairly win it.'

'Bear word of this to your master,' said the prince, 'and ask him which of these five Englishmen he would desire to meet. But stay; your master bears no coat-armour, and we have not yet heard his name.'

'My master, sire, is under vow to the Virgin neither to reveal his name nor to open his vizor until he is back upon French ground once more.'

'Yet what assurance have we,' said the prince, 'that this is not some varlet masquerading in his master's harness, or some caitiff knight, the very touch of whose lance might bring infamy upon an honourable gentleman?'

'It is not so, sire,' cried the squire earnestly. 'There is no man upon earth who would demean himself by breaking a lance with my master.'

'You speak out boldly, squire,' the prince answered; 'but unless I have some further assurance of your master's noble birth and gentle name I cannot match the choicest lances of my court against him.'

'You refuse, sire?'

'I do refuse.'

'Then, sire, I was bidden to ask you from my master whether you would consent if Sir John Chandos, upon hearing my master's

name, should assure you that he was indeed a man with whom you might yourself cross swords without indignity.'

'I ask no better,' said the prince.

'Then I must ask, Lord Chandos, that you will step forth. I have your pledge that the name shall remain ever a secret, and that you will neither say nor write one word which might betray it. The name is ——' He stooped down from his horse and whispered something into the old knight's ear which made him start with surprise, and stare with much curiosity at the distant knight, who was sitting his charger at the further end of the arena.

'Is this indeed sooth?' he exclaimed.

'It is, my lord, and I swear it by St. Ives of Brittany.'

'I might have known it,' said Chandos, twisting his moustache, and still looking thoughtfully at the cavalier.

'What then, Sir John?' asked the prince.

'Sire, this is a knight whom it is indeed great honour to meet, and I would that your grace would grant me leave to send my squire for my harness, for I would dearly love to run a course with him.'

'Nay, nay, Sir John, you have gained as much honour as one man can bear, and it were hard if you could not rest now. But I pray you, squire, to tell your master that he is very welcome to our court, and that wines and spices will be served him if he would refresh himself before jousting.'

'My master will not drink,' said the squire.

'Let him then name the gentleman with whom he would break a spear.'

'He would contend with these five knights, each to choose such weapons as suit him best.'

'I perceive,' said the prince, 'that your master is a man of great heart and high of enterprise. But the sun already is low in the west, and there will scarce be light for these courses. I pray you, gentlemen, to take your places, that we may see whether this stranger's deeds are as bold as his words.'

The unknown knight had sat like a statue of steel, looking neither to the right nor to the left during these preliminaries. He had changed from the horse upon which he had ridden, and bestrode the black charger which his squire had led beside him. His immense breadth, his stern composed appearance, and the mode in which he handled his shield and his lance, were enough

in themselves to convince the thousands of critical spectators that he was a dangerous opponent. Aylward, who stood in the front row of the archers with Simon, big John, and others of the Company, had been criticising the proceedings from the commencement with the ease and freedom of a man who had spent his life under arms and had learned in a hard school to know at a glance the points of a horse and his rider. He stared now at the stranger with a wrinkled brow and the air of a man who is striving to stir his memory.

'By my hilt! I have seen the thick body of him before to-day. Yet I cannot call to mind where it could have been. At Nogent belike, or was it at Auray? Mark me, lads, this man will prove to be one of the best lances of France, and there are no better in the world.'

'It is but child's play, this poking game,' said John. 'I would fain try my hand at it, for, by the black rood! I think that it might be amended.'

'What, then, would you do, John?' asked several.

'There are many things which might be done,' said the forester thoughtfully. 'Methinks that I would begin by breaking my spear.'

'So they all strive to do.'

'Nay, but not upon another man's shield. I would break it over my own knee.'

'And what the better for that, old beef and bones?' asked Black Simon.

'So I would turn what is but a lady's bodkin of a weapon into a very handsome club.'

'And then, John?'

'Then I would take the other's spear into my arm or my leg, or where it pleased him best to put it, and I would dash out his brains with my club.'

'By my ten finger-bones! old John,' said Aylward, 'I would give my feather-bed to see you at a spear-running. This is a most courtly and gentle sport which you have devised.'

'So it seems to me,' said John seriously. 'Or, again, one might seize the other round the middle, pluck him off his horse and bear him to the pavilion, there to hold him to ransom.'

'Good!' cried Simon, amid a roar of laughter from all the archers round. 'By Thomas of Kent! we shall make a camp-marshal of thee, and thou shalt draw up rules for our jousting.

But, John, who is it that you would uphold in this knightly and pleasing fashion?'

'What mean you?'

'Why, John, so strong and strange a tilter must fight for the brightness of his lady's eyes or the curve of her eye-lash, even as Sir Nigel does for the Lady Loring.'

'I know not about that,' said the big archer, scratching his head in perplexity. 'Since Mary hath played me false, I can scarce fight for her.'

'Yet any woman will serve.'

'There is my mother then,' said John. 'She was at much pains at my upbringing, and, by my soul! I will uphold the curve of her eye-lashes, for it tickleth my very heart-root to think of her. But who is here?'

'It is Sir William Beauchamp. He is a valiant man, but I fear that he is scarce firm enough upon the saddle to bear the thrust of such a tilter as this stranger promises to be.'

Aylward's words were speedily justified, for even as he spoke the two knights met in the centre of the lists. Beauchamp struck his opponent a shrewd blow upon the helmet, but was met with so frightful a thrust that he whirled out of his saddle and rolled over and over upon the ground. Sir Thomas Percy met with little better success, for his shield was split, his vambrace torn, and he himself wounded slightly in the side. Lord Audley and the unknown knight struck each other fairly upon the helmet; but, while the stranger sat as firm and rigid as ever upon his charger, the Englishman was bent back to his horse's crupper by the weight of the blow, and had galloped half-way down the lists ere he could recover himself. Sir Thomas Wake was beaten to the ground with a battle-axe—that being the weapon which he had selected—and had to be carried to his pavilion. These rapid successes, gained one after the other over four celebrated warriors, worked the crowd up to a pitch of wonder and admiration. Thunders of applause from the English soldiers, as well as from the citizens and peasants, showed how far the love of brave and knightly deeds could rise above the rivalries of race.

'By my soul! John,' cried the prince, with his cheek flushed and his eyes shining, 'this is a man of good courage and great hardiness. I could not have thought that there was any single arm upon earth which could have overthrown these four champions.'

'He is indeed, as I have said, sire, a knight from whom much honour is to be gained. But the lower edge of the sun is wet, and it will be beneath the sea ere long.'

'Here is Sir Nigel Loring, on foot and with his sword,' said the prince. 'I have heard that he is a fine swordsman.'

'The finest in your army, sire,' Chandos answered. 'Yet I doubt not that he will need all his skill this day.'

As he spoke, the two combatants advanced from either end in full armour with their two-handed swords sloping over their shoulders. The stranger walked heavily and with a measured stride, while the English knight advanced as briskly as though there was no iron shell to weigh down the freedom of his limbs. At four paces distance they stopped, eyed each other for a moment, and then in an instant fell to work with a clatter and clang as though two sturdy smiths were busy upon their anvils. Up and down went the long shining blades, round and round they circled in curves of glimmering light, crossing, meeting, disengaging, with flash of sparks at every parry. Here and there bounded Sir Nigel, his head erect, his jaunty plume fluttering in the air, while his dark opponent sent in crashing blow upon blow, following fiercely up with cut and with thrust, but never once getting past the practised blade of the skilled swordsman. The crowd roared with delight as Sir Nigel would stoop his head to avoid a blow, or by some slight movement of his body allow some terrible thrust to glance harmlessly past him. Suddenly, however, his time came. The Frenchman, whirling up his sword, showed for an instant a chink betwixt his shoulder-piece and the rerebrace which guarded his upper arm. In dashed Sir Nigel, and out again so swiftly that the eye could not follow the quick play of his blade, but a trickle of blood from the stranger's shoulder, and a rapidly widening red smudge upon his white surcoat, showed where the thrust had taken effect. The wound was, however, but a slight one, and the Frenchman was about to renew his onset, when, at a sign from the prince, Chandos threw down his bâton, and the marshals of the lists struck up the weapons and brought the contest to an end.

'It were time to check it,' said the prince, smiling, 'for Sir Nigel is too good a man for me to lose, and, by the five holy wounds! if one of those cuts came home I should have fears for our champion. What think you, Pedro?'

'I think, Edward, that the little man was very well able to

take care of himself. For my part, I should wish to see so well matched a pair fight on while a drop of blood remained in their veins.'

'We must have speech with him. Such a man must not go from my court without rest or sup. Bring him hither, Chandos, and, certes, if the Lord Loring hath resigned his claim upon this goblet, it is right and proper that this cavalier should carry it to France with him as a sign of the prowess that he has shown this day.'

As he spoke, the knight-errant, who had remounted his war-horse, galloped forward to the royal stand, with a silken kerchief bound round his wounded arm. The setting sun cast a ruddy glare upon his burnished armour, and sent his long black shadow streaming behind him up the level clearing. Pulling up his steed, he slightly inclined his head, and sat in the stern and composed fashion with which he had borne himself throughout, heedless of the applauding shouts and the flutter of kerchiefs from the long lines of brave men and of fair women who were looking down upon him.

'Sir knight,' said the prince, 'we have all marvelled this day at this great skill and valour with which God has been pleased to endow you. I would fain that you should tarry at our court, for a time at least, until your hurt is healed and your horses rested.'

'My hurt is nothing, sire, nor are my horses weary,' returned the stranger in a deep stern voice.

'Will you not at least hie back to Bordeaux with us, that you may drain a cup of muscadine and sup at our table?'

'I will neither drink your wine nor sit at your table,' returned the other. 'I bear no love for you or for your race, and there is naught that I wish at your hands until the day when I see the last sail which bears you back to your island vanishing away against the western sky.'

'These are bitter words, sir knight,' said Prince Edward, with an angry frown.

'And they come from a bitter heart,' answered the unknown knight. 'How long is it since there has been peace in my hapless country? Where are the steadings, and orchards, and vineyards which made France fair? Where are the cities which made her great? From Provence to Burgundy we are beset by every prowling hireling in Christendom, who rend and tear the country which you have left too weak to guard her own marches. Is it not a

by-word that a man may ride all day in that unhappy land without seeing thatch upon roof or hearing the crow of cock? Does not one fair kingdom content you, that you should strive so for this other one which has no love for you? Pardieu! a true Frenchman's words may well be bitter, for bitter is his lot and bitter his thoughts as he rides through his thrice unhappy country.'

'Sir knight,' said the prince, 'you speak like a brave man, and our cousin of France is happy in having a cavalier who is so fit to uphold his cause either with tongue or with sword. But if you think such evil of us, how comes it that you have trusted yourself to us without warranty or safe-conduct?'

'Because I knew that you would be here, sire. Had the man who sits upon your right been ruler of this land, I had indeed thought twice before I looked to him for aught that was knightly or generous.' With a soldierly salute, he wheeled round his horse, and, galloping down the lists, disappeared amid the dense crowd of footmen and of horsemen who were streaming away from the scene of the tournament.

'The insolent villain!' cried Pedro, glaring furiously after him. 'I have seen a man's tongue torn from his jaws for less. Would it not be well even now, Edward, to send horsemen to hale him back? Bethink you that it may be one of the royal house of France, or at least some knight whose loss would be a heavy blow to his master. Sir William Felton, you are well mounted, gallop after the caitiff, I pray you.'

'Do so, Sir William,' said the prince, 'and give him this purse of a hundred nobles as a sign of the respect which I bear for him; for, by St. George! he has served his master this day even as I would wish liegeman of mine to serve me.' So saying, the prince turned his back upon the King of Spain, and, springing upon his horse, rode slowly homewards to the Abbey of Saint Andrew's.

(To be continued.)

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BY THE AUTHOR OF 'THE HOUSE OF THE WOLF.'

CHAPTER X.

OUT WITH THE SHEEP.

STEPHEN CLODE had no idea, as he stood listening with a certain pleasure to the archdeacon's hints, of the good turn which fortune was about to do him. If he had foreseen it, he would probably have taken a bolder part in the conversation, and parted from the elder clergyman with a more jubilant step. As it was, he heard no rumour that evening; nor was it until ten o'clock on the Sunday morning that he learned anything was amiss. But, calling at the house in the churchyard at that hour, he was received by Mrs. Baker herself; and he remarked at once that the housekeeper's face fell in a manner far from flattering when she recognised him.

'Oh, it is you, is it, Mr. Clode?' she said, her tone one of disappointment. 'You have not seen him, sir, have you?' she added anxiously.

'Seen whom?' the curate replied in surprise.

'Mr. Lindo, sir.'

'Why? Is he not here?

'Not here? No, sir, he is not,' the housekeeper said, putting her head out to look up and down. 'He never came back last night, and we have not heard of him. I sent across to the Town House to inquire, and the only thing Mrs. Hammond could say was that Mr. Lindo was to follow them, and they supposed he had come.'

'Well, but—who is to do the duty at the church?' Clode

ejaculated, shaping his lips to a whistle. His dismay at the moment was genuine, for he did not at once see how this might tend to his advantage.

'There is only you, sir, unless he comes in time,' the housekeeper replied.

'But I am going to the Hamlet church,' Clode answered, rapidly turning things over in his mind. If there should be no one at the parish church to conduct the chief service of the week, what a talk there would be! It would almost be matter for the bishop's interference! 'You see, I cannot possibly neglect that,' he continued argumentatively, in answer as much to the remonstrance of his own conscience as to the housekeeper. 'It was the rector's own arrangement, Mrs. Baker. You may be sure he will be here in time for the eleven o'clock service. Mr. Homfray has kept him over night. That is all.'

'You do not think he has met with an accident, sir?' Mrs. Baker suggested anxiously. 'They say the coal-pits on Baer Hill——'

'Pooh, pooh! He will be here in a few minutes, you will see,' the curate answered. And he affected to be so cheerfully certain of this that he would not wait even for a little while, but started at once for the Hamlet church—a small chapel-of-ease in the outskirts of the town. There he put on his surplice early, and was ready in excellent time. For punctuality is a virtue.

At half-past ten the bells of the great church began to ring, and presently door after door in the quiet streets about it opened silently, and little parties issued forth in their Sunday clothes and walked stiffly and slowly towards the building. At the moment when the High Street was dotted most thickly with these groups, and the small bell was tinkling its impatient summons, the rattle of an old taxed-cart was heard—first heard as the vehicle flashed quickly over the bridge at the foot of the street. One and another of the church-goers turned to look, for such a sound was rare on a Sunday morning. Great was their astonishment when they recognised, perched up beside the boy who urged on the pony, no less a person than the rector himself! As he jogged up the street in his sorry conveyance and with his sorry companion, he had to pass under the fire of a battery of eyes which did not fail to notice all the peculiarities of his appearance. His tie was awry and his chin unshaven. He had a haggard, dissipated air, as of one who had been up all night, and there was a stain of

dirt on his cheek. He looked dissipated—even disreputable, some said; and he seemed aware of it, for he sat erect, gazing straight before him, and declining to see any one. At the top of the street he descended hastily, and, as the bell jerked out its final note, hurried towards the vestry with a depressed and gloomy face.

'Well!' said Mr. Bonamy to Kate, who was walking up the street by his side, and whose face for some mysterious reason was flushed and troubled, 'I think that is the coolest young man within my experience!'

'Eh?' said a voice behind them as they entered the porch—the speaker was Gregg. 'What do you think of that, Bonamy? A gay young spark, is he not?'

There was time for no more then. But as the congregation waited in their seats through a long voluntary, many were the nods and winks, and incessant the low mutterings, as one communicated to another the details of the scene outside, and his or her view of them. When the rector appeared—nine minutes late by Mr. Bonamy's watch—he looked pale and fagged, and the sermon he preached was of the shortest. Nine-tenths of the congregation noted only the brevity of the discourse, and drew their conclusions. But Kate Bonamy, who sat by her father with downcast eyes and a tinge of colour still in her cheeks, and who scarcely once looked up at the weary face and tumbled hair, fancied, heaven knows why! that she detected a new pathos and a deeper tone of appeal in the few simple sentences; and though she had scarcely spoken to the rector for a month, and was nursing a little contempt for him, the girl felt on a sudden more kindly-disposed towards the young man.

Not so Mr. Bonamy. He came out of church chuckling; full of a grim delight in the fulfilment of his predictions. It was not his custom to linger in the porch, for he was not a sociable man; but he did so to-day, and, letting Kate and Daintry go on, formed one of a coterie of men who had no difficulty in coming to a conclusion about the rector.

'He has been studying hard, poor fellow!' said Gregg, with a wink—there is no dislike so mean and cruel as that which the ill-bred man feels for the gentleman—'reading the devil's books all night!'

'Nine minutes late!' said the lawyer. 'That is what comes of having a young fellow who is always gadding about the country!'

'He could not gad to a more congenial place than Holberton, I should think,' sneered a third.

And then all the sins which the Homfrays had ever committed, and all those which had ever been laid to their charge, were cited to render the rector's case more black. To do him justice, Mr. Bonamy took but a listener's part in this. He was a shrewd man, and he did not believe that the rector could have had anything to do with an elopement from Holberton which had taken place before his name was heard in the county; but he was honestly assured that the young fellow had been sitting over cards or the billiard-table half the night. And as for the other crimes, perhaps he would commit them if he were left to follow his own foolish devices.

'What is ill-gotten soon goes,' said one charitable person with a sneer. 'You may depend upon it that what we hear is true.'

'Yes, it is all of a piece,' another said. 'A man does not have a follower of that kind for nothing?'

'It comes over the devil's back, and goes—you know how?' chimed in a third. 'But perhaps he is wise to make the most of it while it lasts. He is consequential enough now, but the Homfrays will not have much to say to him presently, you will see. A few weeks, and he will go?'

'Well, let him go, for the d—d dissipated gambling parson he is!' said Gregg coarsely, carried away by the unusual agreement with him. 'And the sooner the better, say I!'

The man beside him, a little startled by the doctor's violence, turned round to make sure that they were not overheard, and found himself face to face with the rector, who, seeking to go out—as was not his custom, for he generally used the vestry door—by the porch, had walked into the midst of the group, even as Gregg opened his mouth. A glance at the young man's reddening cheek and compressed lips apprised the startled gossips that he had overheard some part at least of what had been said.

In one way it was the crisis of his fate at Claversham. But he did not know it. If he had been wise—if he had been such a man as his curate, for instance; or if, without being wise, he had learned a little of the prudence which comes of necessity with years—he would have passed through them in silence, satisfied with such revenge as mute contempt could give him. But he was not old, nor very wise; and certain things had lately jarred on his nerves, so that he was not quite himself. He did not pass

by in silence, but, instead, stood for a moment. Then, singling Gregg out with a withering glance, he gave way to his feelings. 'I am much obliged to you for your good opinion,' he said to him; 'but I should be still more obliged if you would swear elsewhere, sir, and not in the porch of my church. Leave the building! Go at once!' And he pointed towards the churchyard with the air of an angry schoolmaster addressing a pupil.

But Gregg did not move. He was astounded by this direct attack, but he had the courage of numbers on his side, and, though he did not dare to answer, he did not budge. Neither did the others, though they felt ashamed of themselves, and looked all ways at once. Only one of them all met the rector's glance fairly, and that was Mr. Bonamy. 'I think the least said the soonest mended, Mr. Lindo,' he replied, with an acrid smile.

'I am sorry that you did not think of that before,' retorted the young man, standing before them with his fair head thrown back, his clerical coat hanging loose, and his brow dark with indignation—for he had heard enough to be able to guess the cause of Gregg's remark. 'Do you come to church only to cavil and backbite?—to put the worst construction on what you cannot understand?'

'Speaking for myself,' replied the churchwarden coolly, 'the sole thing with which I can charge myself is the remark that you were somewhat late for service this morning, Mr. Lindo.'

'And if I was?' said the clergyman in his haughtiest tone.

'Well, of course there may have been a good cause for it,' the lawyer replied drily. 'But it is a thing I have not known happen here for twenty years.'

An altercation with these men, none of whom were well disposed towards him, and half of whom were tradespeople, was the last thing upon which the young rector should have allowed himself to enter; and the last thing to which he would have condescended in his normal frame of mind. But on this unlucky morning he was nervous and irritable; and, finding himself thus bearded and defied, he spoke foolishly. 'You trouble yourself too much, Mr. Bonamy,' he said impulsively, 'with things which do not concern you! The parish, among other things. You have set yourself, as I know, to thwart and embarrass me; but I warn you that you are not strong enough! I shall find means to——'

'To put me down, in fact?' said Mr. Bonamy.

The young man hesitated, his face crimson. His opponent's

sallow features, seamed with a hundred astute wrinkles, warned him, if the covert smiles of the others did not, that, in his present mood at any rate, he was not a match for the lawyer. He had gone too far already, as he was now aware. 'No,' he replied, swallowing his rage, 'but to keep you to your proper province, as I hope to keep to mine. I wish you good morning.'

He passed through them, and hurried away, more angry with them, and with himself for allowing them to provoke him, than he had ever felt in his life. He knew well that he had been foolish. He knew that he had lowered himself in their eyes by his display of temper. But, though he was bitterly annoyed with himself, the consciousness that the fault had originally lain with them, and that they had grievously misjudged him, kept his anger hot; for there is no wrath so fierce as the indignation of the man falsely accused. He called them under his breath an uncharitable, spiteful, tattling crew; and was so far immersed in thought of them that he had entered his dining-room before he remembered that he was engaged to take the midday meal at the Town House; as he had done once or twice before, afterwards walking up with Laura to the schools.

He washed and changed hurriedly, keeping his anger hot the while, and then went across, with the tale on the tip of his tongue. Again, if he had been wise, he would have kept what had happened to himself. But the soothing luxury of unfolding his wrong to someone who would sympathise was a balsam he could not in his soreness forego.

It was a particularly mild day for the fourth Sunday in Advent, and he found Miss Hammond still lingering before the door. She was looking for violets under the north wall, and he joined her, and naturally broke at once into the story of what had happened. She was wearing a little close bonnet, which set off her piquant features and bright colouring to peculiar advantage, and, as far as looks went, no young man in trouble ever had a better listener. Only to stand beside her on the lawn, where the old trees shut out all view of the town and the troubles he connected with it, was a relief. Of course the search for violets was soon abandoned. 'It is abominable!' she said. But her voice was like the cooing of a dove. She did everything softly. Even her indignation was gentle.

'But you have not heard yet,' he protested, 'why I really was late.'

'I know what is being said,' she murmured, looking up at him, a gleam of humour in her brown eyes—'that you stayed at the Homfrays' all night, playing cards. My maid told me as we came in after church.'

'Ha! I knew that they were saying something of the kind,' he replied savagely. He took the matter so much to heart that she felt her little attempt at badinage reproved. 'The true reason was of a very different description,' he continued. 'What spiteful busybodies they are! I started to return last evening about half-past nine, but as I passed Baer Hill Colliery I learned that there had been an accident. A man going down the shaft with the night shift had been crushed—hurt beyond help,' the rector continued in a lower voice. 'He wanted to see a clergyman; and the other pitmen, some of whom had seen me pass earlier in the day, stopped me and took me to him.'

'How sad! How very sad!' she ejaculated. Somehow she felt ill at ease with him in this mood. With his last words a kind of veil had fallen between them.

'I stayed with him the night,' the rector continued. 'He died at half-past nine this morning. I came straight from that to this. And they say these things of me!'

His voice, though low, was hard, and yet there was a suspicious break in it as he uttered his last words. Injustice touches a man, young and not yet hardened, very sorely; and he was overwrought. Laura, fingering her little bunch of violets, heard the catch in his voice, and knew that he was not very far from tears.

She was almost terrified. She longed to respond, to say the proper thing, but here her powers deserted her. She was not capable of much emotion, unless the call especially concerned herself; and she could not rise to this occasion. She could only murmur again that it was abominable and too bad; or, taking her cue from the young man's face, say that it was very sad. She said enough, it is true, to satisfy him, though not herself; for he only wanted a listener. And for the rest, when he went in to lunch, Mrs. Hammond more than bore him out in all his denunciations; so that when he left to go to the schools he had fully made up his mind to carry things through.

The quarrel indeed did him more injury by throwing him into the arms of the party which his own pleasure and taste led him to prefer than in any other way. He did not demur when Mrs. Hammond—meaning little evil, but expressing prejudices which

at one time she had sedulously cultivated (for when one lives near the town one must take especial care not to be confounded with it)—talked of a set of butchers and bakers, and said, much more strongly than he had, that Mr. Bonamy must be kept in his place. A little quarrel with the lawyer, a little social relaxation in which the young fellow had lost sight of the excellent intentions with which he had set out, then this final quarrel—such had been the course of events; sufficient, taken with his own fastidiousness and inexperience, to bring him to this.

Mrs. Hammond, standing at the drawing-room window, watched him as he walked down the short drive. 'I like that young man,' she said decisively. 'He is thrown away upon these people.'

Her daughter, who had not gone to the schools, yawned. 'He has not one-half the brains of someone else we know, mother,' she answered.

'Who is that?'

But Laura did not reply; and probably her mother understood, for she did not press the question. 'Well,' Mrs. Hammond said, after a moment's silence, 'perhaps he has not. I do not know. But at any rate he is a gentleman from the crown of his head to the tips of his toes.'

'I dare say he is,' Laura admitted languidly.

Mrs. Hammond, depositing her portly form in a suitable chair, watched her daughter curiously. She would have given a good deal to be able to read the girl's mind and learn her intentions; but she was too wise to ask questions, and had always given her the fullest liberty. She had watched the growth of the intimacy between Laura and Mr. Clode without demur, feeling a considerable liking for the man herself, though she scarcely thought him a suitable match for her daughter. On the old rector's death there had seemed for a few days a chance of Mr. Clode being appointed his successor; and at that time Mrs. Hammond had fancied she detected a shade of anxiety and excitement in Laura's manner. But Mr. Clode had not been appointed, and the new rector had come; and Laura had apparently transferred her favour from the curate to him.

At this Mrs. Hammond had felt somewhat troubled—at first; but in a short time she had naturally reconciled herself to the change, the rector's superiority as a *parti* being indisputable. Yet still Mrs. Hammond felt no certainty as to Laura's real feel-

ings, and, gazing at her this afternoon, was as much in the dark as ever. That the girl was fond of her she knew; indeed, it was quite a pretty sight to see the daughter purring about the mother. But Mrs. Hammond was more than half inclined to doubt now whether Laura was fond, or capable of being fond, of any other human being except herself.

She sighed gently as she thought of this, and rang the bell for tea. 'I think we will have it early this afternoon,' she said. 'I feel I want a cup.'

CHAPTER XI.

THE DOCTOR SPEAKS.

The feelings with which the curate hastened, on the conclusion of his own service, to learn what had happened at the great church may be imagined. His excitement and curiosity were not the less because he had to hide them. If there really had been no service—if the rector had not appeared—what a scandal, what a subject for talk was here! Even if the rector had appeared a little late there would still be whispering; for new brooms are expected to sweep clean. The curate composed his dark face, and purposely made one or two sick-calls at houses which lay in his road, lest he might seem to ask the question he had to put too pointedly. By the time he reached the rectory he had made up his mind, judging from the absence of stir in the streets, that nothing very unusual had happened.

'Is the rector in?' he asked the servant.

'No, sir; he has gone to the Town House to dinner,' the girl answered.

Involuntarily Mr. Clode frowned. 'He was in time for service, I suppose?' he asked, more abruptly than he had intended.

'Oh, yes, sir,' the maid answered readily. She had not been to church.

'Thank you; that is all,' he answered, turning away. So nothing had come of it after all! His heart was sick with disappointed hope as he turned into his own dull lodgings; and he felt that the rector in being in time had wronged him afresh, and by dining at the Town House had added insult to injury.

But in the course of the day he learned how late the rector had been; and early next morning some rumour of the triangular

altercation in the church porch also reached him—of course in an exaggerated form. As a fact, all Clavershame was by this time talking of it, Mr. Bonamy's companions, with one exception, taking good care to make the most of his success, and to paint the rebuff he had administered to the clergyman in the deepest colours. The curate heard the news with a face of grave concern, but with secret delight, and, turning over in his mind what use he might make of it, came opportunely upon Gregg as the latter was going his rounds. 'Hallo!' he cried, speaking so loudly that the doctor, who had turned away and would fain have retreated, could not decently escape, 'you are the very man I wanted to see! What is this absurd story about the rector and you? There is not a word of truth in it, I suppose?'

'I am sure I cannot say until you tell me what it is,' replied the doctor snappishly. He was a little afraid of the curate, who had a knack of being unpleasant without giving an opening in return.

'Why, you seem rather sore about it,' Clode remarked, with apparent surprise.

'I do not know why I should be!' sneered the doctor, his face dark red with anger.

'Certainly not, if there is no truth in the story,' the curate replied, looking down with his eyes half shut at the chafing little man. 'But I suppose it is all an invention, Gregg?'

'It is not an invention that the rector was abominably rude to me,' blurted out the doctor, who scarcely knew with whom to be most angry—his present tormentor or the first cause of his trouble.

'Pooh!' said Clode, 'it is only his way.

'Then it is a d——, it is a most unpleasant way!' retorted the doctor savagely.

'He means no harm,' said the curate gaily. 'Why did you not answer him back?'

Dr. Gregg's face turned a shade redder. That was where the shoe pinched. Why had he not answered him back as Bonamy had, and not stood mute, acknowledging himself the smaller man? That was what was troubling him now, and making him fancy himself the laughing-stock of the town. 'I will answer him back in a way he will not like!' he cried viciously, striving to hide his embarrassment under a show of bluster.

'Tut-t-tut!' said the curate provokingly, 'do not go and

make a fool of yourself by saying things like that, when you know you don't mean them, man. What can you say to the rector?'

'I will ask him——'

But what he would ask the rector was lost to the world, for at that moment Mr. Bonamy, coming down the pavement behind him, touched his sleeve. 'I have just been to your house, doctor,' he said. 'My younger girl is a little out of sorts. Would you mind stepping in and seeing her?'

Gregg swallowed his wrath, and secretly perhaps was thankful for the interruption. He said he would; and the lawyer turned to Mr. Clode. 'Well,' he said, with a grim geniality, 'so you have made up your minds to fight?'

'I am not quite sure,' the curate answered with caution—for he knew better than to treat Mr. Bonamy as he treated Gregg—'that I take you.'

'You have not seen your principal this morning?' replied the lawyer, with a smile which for him was almost benevolent. The prospect of a fight was as the Mountains of Beulah to him.

'Do you mean Mr. Lindo?' asked the curate, with some curtness.

The lawyer nodded. 'I see you have not,' he continued. 'So I dare say you do not know that he turned the sheep out of the churchyard after breakfast this morning, and half of them were found nearly a mile away down the Red Lane!'

'I did not know it,' said the curate gravely. But it was as much as he could do to restrain his exultation. It was by a mighty effort he restrained all signs save of concern.

'Well, it is the fact,' the lawyer replied, rubbing his hands. 'It is quite true he gave the churchwardens notice to remove them a fortnight ago; but we did not comply, because we say it is our affair, and not his. Now you may tell him from me that the only question in my mind is the form of action.'

'I will tell him,' said the curate with dignity.

'Just so! What do you say, Gregg?'

But the doctor, grinning from ear to ear with satisfaction, was gone; and the curate, not a whit less pleased in his heart, hastened to follow his example. 'Bonamy one, and Gregg two,' he said softly to himself, 'and last, but not least, one who shall be nameless, three! He has made three enemies already, and if those be not enough, with right on their side, to oust him from his seat when the time comes, why, I know nothing of odds!'

'With right on their side,' the curate said, even to himself. It is true he had made no second attempt to pry into the rector's secrets or to bring home to him a knowledge of the wrongfulness of his possession. But he did still believe, or persuaded himself he believed, that Lindo was a guilty man; or why should the young rector pension the old earl's servant? And on this ground Clode justified to himself the secret ill-turns he was doing him. A month's intimacy with the rector would probably have convinced an impartial mind of his good faith. But the curate had not, it must be remembered, an impartial mind; and we are all very apt to believe what suits us.

To return to the little doctor, whom we left going on his way in a mood almost hilarious. He saw that this fresh escapade of the rector's would wipe out the memory of the fray in which he had himself borne so inglorious a part. And the more he thought of it, the greater was his admiration of the lawyer, whom he had long patronised in a timid fashion, much as a snub-nosed King Charlie patronises a butcher's mongrel. Now he began to feel a positive reverence for him. He began to think it possible that, with all his drawbacks of birth, Mr. Bonamy might become a personage in the town, and pretty Kate not so bad a match. These musings quickly had their effect; so quickly that, by the time he reached the lawyer's door, an idea which he had first entertained on seeing the young clergyman's admiration for Kate Bonamy, and which he had since turned over more than once in his mind, had become a settled purpose. So much so that, as he rang the bell, he looked at his hands. They were not so clean as they might have been, but he pished and pshawed, and settled his light-blue scarf—which the next minute rose again to the level of his collar—and at length went in with a briskly juvenile air and an engaging smile.

He found Daintry lying on the sofa in the dining-room downstairs, her head on a white bed-pillow. Kate was leaning over her. The room was in some disorder—littered with this and that, a bottle of eau de Cologne, Mr. Bonamy's papers, some books, some sewing; but it looked comfortable, for it was very evidently inhabited. A fastidious eye might have thought it was too much inhabited; and yet proofs of refinement were not wanting, though the sofa was covered with horsehair, and the mirror was heavy and ugly, and the grate, knee-high, was as old as the Georges. There were flowers on the table and on the little cottage piano; and by the

side of the last was a violin-case. Not many people in Clavershamknew that Mr. Bonamy played the violin. Still fewer had heard him play, for he never did so out of his own house.

Possibly a very particular suitor might have preferred to find Kate attending on her sister in a boudoir, free from a lawyer's papers, furnished in a less solid and durable style, and with some livelier look-out than through wire blinds upon a dull street. But another might have thought that the office in which she was engaged, and the gentleness of her touch and eye as she went about it, made up for all deficiencies.

Dr. Gregg was not of a nature to appreciate either the deficiencies or the set-off; but he had eyes for the girl's grace and beauty, for the neatness of the well-fitting blue gown and the white collar and cuffs; and he shook hands with her and devoted himself to Daintry—who disliked him extremely and was very fractious—with the most anxious solicitude. 'It is only a sick headache!' he said finally, with bluntness which was meant for encouragement. 'It is nothing, you know.'

'I wish you had it, then!' Daintry wailed, burying her face in the pillow.

'It will be gone in the morning!' he retorted, rising, and keeping his temper by an unnatural effort. 'She will be the better for it afterwards, Miss Bonamy.'

To this Daintry vouchsafed no answer, unless a muttered 'Rubbish!' were intended for one. He affected not to hear it. He was all good-temper this morning; the unfortunate point about this being that his good-nature was a shade more unpleasant than his usual snappish manner.

At any rate Kate thought it so. She felt the instinctive repulsion which the wrong man's wooing awakens in an unspoiled girl. She was conscious of an added dislike for him as she held out her hand to him at the dining-room door. But she did not divine the cause of this; nor for a moment conjecture his purpose when he said in a low voice that he wished to speak to her outside.

'May we go in here a moment?' he muttered, when the door was safely closed behind them. He pointed to the room on the other side of the hall, which Mr. Bonamy used in summer as a kind of office.

'There is no fire there,' Kate answered. 'I think it has been lighted upstairs, however, if you do not mind coming up, Dr. Gregg. Is there anything'—this was when he had silently

followed her into the stiff drawing-room, where the newly-lit fire was rather smoking than burning—'serious the matter with her, then?'

Her voice was steady, but her eyes betrayed the sudden anxiety his manner had aroused in her.

'With your sister?' he answered slowly. He was really pondering how he should say what he had come to say. But, naturally, she set down his thoughtfulness to a professional cause.

'Yes,' she said anxiously.

'Oh, no—nothing, nothing. The truth is,' the doctor continued, following up a happy thought and smiling approval of it, 'the matter is with me, Miss Bonamy.'

'With you!' Kate exclaimed, opening her eyes in astonishment. Her momentary anxiety had put all else out of her head. She thought the doctor had gone mad.

'Yes,' he said jerkily, but with a grin of tender meaning, 'with me. And you are the cause of it. Now do not be frightened, Miss Kate,' he continued hastily, seeing her start of apprehension. 'You must have known for a long time what I was thinking of.'

'Indeed I have not,' Kate murmured in a low voice. She did not affect to misunderstand him.

'Well, you easily might have known it then,' he retorted rather sharply, forgetting his *rôle* for an instant. 'But the long and the short of it is that I want you to marry me. I do!' he repeated, overcoming something in his throat, and going on from this point swimmingly. 'And you will please to hear me out, and not answer in a hurry, Miss Kate. If you like—but I should not think that you would want it—you can have until to-morrow to think it over.'

'No,' she replied impulsively, her face crimson. And then she shut her mouth so suddenly, it seemed she was afraid to let anything escape it except that unmistakable monosyllable.

'Very well,' he replied, comfortably settling his elbow upon the mantelshelf, and turning his hat in his hands, while he kept his eyes on her, 'that is as you like. I hope it does not want much thinking over myself. I will not boast that I am a rich man, but I am decently off. I flatter myself that I can keep my head above water—and yours, too, for the matter of that.'

'Oh, it is not that,' she answered hurriedly.

'Now, do not be in a hurry,' he said jocularly—his last re-

marks had put him into a state of considerable self-satisfaction, and he no more thought it likely that she would refuse him than that the sky would fall—'do not buy a pig in a poke! Hear me out first, Miss Kate, and we shall start fair. You have been in my house, and, if it is not quite so large a house as this, I will answer for it you will find it a great deal more lively. You will see people you have never seen here, nor will see while your name is Bonamy. You will have—well, altogether a better time. Not that I mind myself,' the doctor added rather vaguely, forgetting the French proverb about those who excuse themselves, 'what your name is; not I! So don't you think you could say Yes at once, my dear?'

He took a step nearer, thinking he had put it rather neatly and without any nonsense. Possibly, from his point of view, he had. But Kate fell back, nevertheless, as he advanced.

'Oh, no,' she said, flushing painfully. 'I could not! I could not indeed, Dr. Gregg! I am very sorry.'

'Come, come,' he said, holding out his hand, his tone one of pleasant raillery—he had looked for some hanging back, some show of coyness and bashfulness, and was prepared to laugh in his sleeve at it—'I think you can, Kate. I think it is possible.' That it was in woman's nature to say No to his comfortable home and the little lift in society he had to offer—it is only little lifts we appreciate, just up the next floor above us—he did not believe.

But Kate soon undeceived him. 'I am afraid it is not possible,' she said firmly. 'Indeed, I may say at once, Dr. Gregg, that what you ask is out of the question; though I thank you, I am sure.'

His face fell ludicrously. His thick black brows drew together in a very ominous fashion. But he still could not believe that she meant it. 'I do not think you understand,' he said, exerting himself to be patient, 'that the house is ready, and the furniture and servants, and that there is nothing to prevent you stepping into it whenever you please. I will take you away from this,' he continued, darting a scornful glance round the stiff, chilly room—'I do not suppose that ten people enter this room in the twelvemonth—and I will show you something like life. It is an offer not many would make you. Come, Kate, do not be a little fool! You are not going to say No, so say Yes at once. And don't let us shilly-shally!'

He had put out his hand as he spoke and captured hers. But

she snatched it from him again almost roughly, and stepped back. The right man might have used the words the doctor used, and might have scolded her with impunity, but not the wrong one. Her face, perplexed and troubled a moment before, grew decided enough now. 'I am going to say No, nevertheless, Dr. Gregg,' she replied, raising her head and speaking with decision. 'I thought I had already said it. I will be as plain as you have been. I do not like you as a wife should like her husband, nor otherwise than as a friend.'

'A friend!' he exclaimed, gasping as a man does who has been plunged suddenly into cold water. His face was red with anger. His little whiskers bristled. His black eyes glared at her banefully. 'Oh, bother your friendship!' he added violently. 'I did not ask you for that!'

'I have nothing else to give you,' she replied coldly.

He gasped again. Refused by the Bonamy girl! It was incredible. He had never thought of it as possible. He was beside himself with astonishment and anger, with disappointment and wounded pride. 'You would not have said this a month ago!' he sputtered at last. 'It was a pity I did not ask you then!'

'I should have given you the same answer.'

'Oh, no,' he replied with savage irony, swinging his hat to and fro. 'Oh, no, you would not—not at all, Miss Bonamy. You would have sung to a very different tune if I had whistled to you before this niminy-piminy parson showed his face here! Do not think that I am such a fool as not to see which way the wind is blowing.'

She stood looking at him in silence. But her face was scarlet, and her hand shook with rage.

He saw it. 'Pooh! do not think to frighten me!' he said coarsely. 'When a man has offered to marry you he has a right to speak his mind! It will be a long time, I warrant you, before your parson will have the same right to speak. He was very great with you once, but he has quite another set of friends now, and I have not heard of him offering to introduce you to them.'

'Will you go, Dr. Gregg?' she cried passionately, pointing to the door. His taunts were torture to her. 'Will you go, or do you wish to stay and insult me further?'

'I wish to say one thing, and I am going to say it,' he replied, nodding triumphantly. 'You are pretty proud of your capture, but you need not be. He will not be much of a match when we

have stripped him of the living he has no right to, and proved him the detected swindler he is! Wait—wait a little, Miss Bonamy, and when your parson is ruined, as he will be before three months are out, high as he holds his head now, perhaps you will be sorry that you did not take my offer. Why,' he added scornfully, 'I should say you are the only person in the parish who does not know he has no more right to be where he is than I have.'

'Go!' she said, pointing to the door. Her face was white now.

'So I will when I have said one more word——'

'You won't say it!' a sharp voice cried behind him. 'You will go now!' He shot round, and there was Daintry, with her hand on the door. Her hair was in disorder, her cheeks were flushed, her greenish-grey eyes were aglow with anger. He saw that she had overheard something of what had passed, and he began to tremble, for he had said more than he intended. 'You will go now, as Kate tells you,' she cried. 'I will not have——'

'Leave the room, child!' he snarled, stamping his foot.

'I shan't!' she retorted fiercely. 'And if you do not go before I count three I will fetch the dogs.'

Dr. Gregg made a movement as if he would have put her out of the room. But her presence had a little sobered him, and he stopped. 'Look here,' he said.

'One!' cried Daintry, who knew well that the doctor had a particular dislike for Snorum, and that the dog's presence was at any time enough to drive him from the house.

He turned and looked at Kate. She had gone to the window and was gazing out, her back to him, her figure proud and scornful. 'Miss Bonamy,' he said.

'Two!' cried Daintry. 'Are you going, or shall I fetch Snorum?'

With a muttered oath he took up his hat and went down the stairs. He passed out into the street. But near the door he stood a moment, grinding his teeth, as the full sense of the calamity which had befallen him came home to him. He had stooped and been rejected. He had been rejected by Bonamy's daughter. He walked away, and still his anger did not decrease. But all the same he began to be a little thankful that the child had interrupted him. Had he gone on he might have said too much. As it was, he had an idea that perhaps he had said more than was quite prudent. And this had presently a wonderful effect in the way of sobering him.

CHAPTER XII.

THE RECTOR IS UNGRATEFUL.

NEEDLESS to say, tea-time at Mr. Bonamy's was five-thirty; the lawyer knew nothing of four o'clock tea. He would have stared had he been invited into the drawing-room to take it, or had his daughters produced one of those dainty afternoon tea-tables which were in use at the Town House, and asked him to support his cup and saucer on his knee. Compromises found no favour with him. Tea was a meal—he had always so considered it; and he liked to have the dining-room table laid for it. Possibly Kate, had she enjoyed more of her own way, would have altered this, as she would certainly have reformed the drawing-room. But Mr. Bonamy, who was in many things an indulgent father, was conservative in some. Four o'clock tea, and a daily use of the drawing-room, were refinements which he had always regarded as peculiar to a certain set; and in his pride he would not appear to ape its ways or affect to belong to it.

Almost to the moment he came into the room, which was as bright and cheerful as gaslight and firelight could make it. Laying some letters under a weight on the mantelshelf, he turned round, and stood with his back to the fireplace. 'How is the child?' he asked. 'Has she gone to bed?'

'Yes,' Kate answered, lifting the lid of the teapot and looking in. 'I think she will be all right after a night's rest.'

'You do not look very bright yourself, Kate,' he continued, as he sat down.

Her cheek flushing, she made the old woman's excuse. 'I have a little headache,' she said. 'It will be better when I have had my tea.'

He took a piece of toast and buttered it deliberately. 'Gregg came and saw her?' he asked.

'Yes. He said it was only a sick headache, and would pass off.'

The lawyer made no comment at the moment, but went on eating his toast. But presently he looked up. 'What is the matter, Kitty?' he said, not unkindly.

Her face burning, she peered again quite unnecessarily into the teapot. Then she said hurriedly, 'I have something I think I ought to tell you, father. Dr. Gregg has asked me—to marry him!'

'The deuce he has!' Mr. Bonamy answered. His surprise was unmistakable. For a moment he did not know what to say, or how to feel about it. If any one had informed the Claversham people that the lawyer's moroseness was not natural to the man, but the product of many slights, the informant would have lost his pains. Yet in a great measure this was so; and first among the things which of late years had exercised Mr. Bonamy, a keen anxiety for his daughters' happiness had place. He had never made any move towards procuring them the society of their equals; nay, he had done many things in his pride calculated rather to prolong their exclusion. Yet all the time he had bitterly resented it, and had spent many a wakeful night in pondering gloomily over the dull lives to which they were condemned. Now—strange that he had never thought of it before—as far as Kate was concerned, he saw a way of escape opening. Gregg had a fair practice, some private means, a good house, a tolerable position in the town. In a word, he was perfectly eligible. Yet Mr. Bonamy was not altogether pleased. He had no fastidious objection to the doctor. It did not occur to him that the doctor was not a gentleman. But he did know that he did not like him.

So the lawyer, after one exclamation of surprise, was for a moment silent. Then he asked, 'Well, Kate, and what did you say?'

'I said No,' Kate answered in a low voice.

'He is a well-to-do man,' Mr. Bonamy remarked, slowly stirring his tea. 'Not that you need think of that only. But you are not likely to know many people who could make you more comfortable. I believe he is skilful in his profession. It is a chance, girl, not to be lightly thrown away.'

'I could not—I could not marry him,' Kate stammered, her agitation now very apparent. 'I do not like him. You would not have me——'

'I would not have you marry any one you do not like!' Mr. Bonamy replied, almost sternly. 'But are you sure that you know your own mind?'

'Quite,' Kate said, with a shudder.

'Hum! Well, well; there is no more to be said, then,' he answered. 'Don't cry, girl.'

Kate managed to obey him. And in a moment, bravely steadying her voice, she asked, 'What is this about Mr. Lindo, father? I heard that he had turned the sheep out of the churchyard.'

The lawyer thought she asked the question in order to change the subject; and he answered briskly, with less reserve perhaps than he might have practised at another time. 'It is quite true,' he said. 'He is making a fool of himself, as I expected. You cannot put old heads on young shoulders. However, what has happened has convinced me of one thing.'

'What is that?' she asked in a low voice.

'That he does not know himself that he has no right here.'

'No right here?' she murmured, in the same tone. 'But has he none?' He noticed that her manner was conscious and embarrassed; but naturally he set this down to the former topic. He thought she was trying to avoid a scene, and he admired her for it.

'Well, I doubt if he has,' he answered, 'though I am not quite sure that people have not happened upon a mare's nest. It is the talk of the town that there was some mistake in his presentation, and there is a disreputable fellow hanging on his heels, and apparently living on him, who is said to be in the secret, and to be making the most of it. I do not believe that now, however,' the lawyer continued, falling into a brown study and speaking as much to himself as to her. 'If he knew he were insecure he would live more quietly than he does. All the same, he is likely to learn a lesson he will not forget.'

'How?' she asked, her spoon tinkling tremulously against the side of the cup, and her head bent low over it, as though she saw something interesting in the lees.

Mr. Bonamy laughed in his out-of-door manner. 'How?' he said grimly. 'Well, if there be any mistake, he is going the right way to suffer by it. If he kept quiet, and went softly, and made no enemies, very little might be said, and nothing done when the mistake came out. But as it is—well, he has made a good many enemies, and the chances are that he will lose the best berth he will ever get into. It will be bad for him, but the better for the parish.'

'Don't you think,' said Kate very gently, 'that he means well?'

Mr. Bonamy grunted. 'Perhaps so, but he does not go the right way to do it,' he rejoined. 'His good fortune has turned his head, and he has put himself into the hands of the Hammond set. And that does not do at Claversham.' The lawyer closed his speech with a harsh laugh, which said more plainly than any

words, that it never would do while John Bonamy was churchwarden at Claversham.

'It seems a pity,' Kate ventured, almost under her breath. She had never raised her eyes from the tea-tray since the subject was introduced, and if her father had looked closely he would have seen that her very ears were scarlet. 'Could you not give him a word of warning?'

'I!' said the lawyer, with asperity. 'Certainly not; why should I?'

Kate did not say, and her father, with another impatient word or two, rose from the table, and presently went out. She rang the bell mechanically and had the table cleared, and in the same mood turned to the fire and, putting her feet on the fender, began to brood over the coals, which were burning red and low in the grate.

Five times—five times only, counting the Oxford escapade as one, she had spoken to him; and they—'they' meant Claversham, for it was her chief misery to believe that the whole town was talking of her—had made this of it! They had noticed his attentions, and had seen them scornfully withdrawn when he learned who she was. Oh, it was cowardly of him. And yet, had he ever—so her thoughts ran, taking a fresh turn—had he ever said a word or cast a glance at her which meant anything—which all the world might not have heard and seen? No, never. And then her anger changed its course and ran against Gregg. Him she would never forgive. It was his evil imagination, his base suspicions, which had built it all up; and Mr. Lindo was no more to blame—though she a little despised him for his weakness and conventionality—than she was herself.

It seemed most sad that he should be ruined because no one would say a word to warn him. Brooding over the fire, she felt a girl's pity for the man's ill-fortune. She forgot the last month, during which she had spoken to him but once—and then he had seemed embarrassed and anxious to be gone—and remembered only how frank and gay he had been in the first blush of his hopes at Oxford, how pleasantly he had smiled, how well and yet how quaintly his new dignity had sat upon him, and how naïvely he had shaken it off at times and shown himself a boy, with a boy's love of fun and mischief. Or, again, she remembered how thoughtful he had been for them, how considerate, how much at home in scenes new to them, with how lordly an air he had pro-

vided for their comfort. Oh, it was a pity—a grievous pity, that his hopes should end in such a disaster as Mr. Bonamy foretold! And all because no one would say a friendly word to him!

The next day was a wet day—a sleety, blusterous winter day, and she did not go out. But on the following one, as the rector crossed the churchyard after reading the Litany, he saw Miss Bonamy passing his door. He fancied, with a little astonishment—for she had constantly evinced the same avoidance of intimacy with him which had at first piqued him—that she slightly checked her pace so as to meet him. And, to tell the truth, the rector was half pleased and half annoyed. He had hardened his heart and set his face to crush Mr. Bonamy. He had in his pocket a letter from the lawyer, warning him that, unless he altered his course, a writ would be served upon him. And a dozen times to-day he had in his mind called the churchwarden hard names. Yet he was not absolutely ill-pleased to see Miss Bonamy. He felt a certain excitement in the *rencontre* under the circumstances. He would meet her magnanimously; and of course she would ignore the quarrel. He hated Mr. Bonamy for a puritanical old pettifogger; but that was no reason why he should be rude to the lawyer's daughter.

Lindo saw, when he was a few paces from her and had raised his hat, that her face expressed more embarrassment than seemed to be called for by the occasion. And naturally this communicated itself to him. 'I have not seen you for a long time,' he said mechanically, as he shook hands. Perhaps the worst thing he could have said under the circumstances.

She assented, however. 'No,' she said, sloping her umbrella behind her so as to keep off the wind and a half-frozen drizzle with which it was laden. And, as she did this, her eyes met his gallantly. 'But I am glad, Mr. Lindo,' she went on, 'that I have met you to-day, because I have something I want to say to you.'

On the instant he vowed within himself that it would be in bad taste, in the worst taste, if she referred to the quarrel or to parish matters. And he answered very frigidly, 'What is that, Miss Bonamy? Pray speak on.'

She detected the change of tone, and for a second her grey eyes flashed. But she had come to say something. She had counted the cost, and nothing he could do should prevent her saying it. She had lain awake all night, torturing herself with imagining the things he would think of her. But she was not to

be deterred by the reality. 'Do you know, Mr. Lindo,' she said steadily, 'what is being said of you in the town?'

'A good many hard things,' he answered half lightly and half bitterly. 'So I have reason to believe. But I do not think that they will affect me one way or the other, Miss Bonamy.'

'And so,' she answered, with spirit, 'you will not thank any one for telling you of them? That is what you mean?'

He was very sore, and her interference annoyed him excessively—possibly because he valued her good opinion. He would not deny the feeling she imputed to him. 'Possibly I do mean something of that kind,' he said stiffly. 'Where ignorance is bliss —you know.'

'Yet there is one thing,' she replied, 'being said of you in the town, which I think you should be told, Mr. Lindo. Your friends probably will not hear it, or, if they do, they will not venture to tell you of it.'

'Indeed,' he answered. 'You pique my curiosity.'

'It is being commonly said,' she rejoined, looking down for the first time, 'that you have no right to the living, and were appointed by some mistake, or—or fraud.'

He did not answer her at once. He was so completely taken by surprise that he stood looking at her with his mouth open. His first and better impulse was to laugh heartily. His second, and the one he acted upon, was to say in a very quiet way, 'Indeed. That is being said, is it? It is quite true I had not heard it. May I ask, Miss Bonamy, if you had it from your father?'

If his tone had been cold before, it was freezing now. But she was not to be daunted, and she answered with considerable presence of mind, 'I heard from my father that that was the report in the town, Mr. Lindo. But I also heard him express his disbelief in the greater part of it.'

'I am much obliged to him,' the rector said through his closed teeth. 'He did not think I had been guilty of fraud, then?'

'No, he did not,' Kate muttered, her voice faltering for the first time.

'Indeed. I am much obliged to him.'

He had received it even worse than she had expected. It was terrible to go on in the face of such scorn and incredulity. But to stop there was to have done only evil, as Kate knew, and she went on. 'I have one more thing I wish to say, if you will

permit me,' she continued, steadying her voice and striving to speak in as indifferent a manner as possible.

He bowed, his face hard and contemptuous.

The wind had shifted slightly, and, to protect herself from the small rain which was falling, she changed her position, so as to face the churchyard. He saw only her profile now. If he looked proud, involuntarily he remarked how proud she looked also—how pure and cold was the line of her features, softened only by the roundness of the chin. 'I am told,' she said in a low voice, 'that the fewer enemies you make, and the more quietly you proceed, the greater will be the chance of your remaining when the mistake is found out. Pray,' she said more sharply, for he had raised his hand, as if to interrupt, 'have patience for a moment, Mr. Lindo. I shall not trouble you again. I only wish you to know that those who have cause to dislike you—I do not mean my father, there are others—feel that you are playing into their hands, and consider every disagreement between you and any part of the parish as a weapon to be used when the time comes.'

'When the mistake is found out?' he said, grimly repeating her words. 'Or the fraud? But I forgot—Mr. Bonamy does not believe in that!'

'You understand me, I think,' she said, ignoring the latter part of his speech.

'And may I ask,' he continued, his eyes on her face, 'who my ill-wishers are?'

'I do not think their names are material,' she answered.

'Then, at least, why I am indebted to you for this warning?'

His tone as he asked the question was as contemptuous as before. Yet Kate felt that this she must answer. To refuse to answer it, or to evade it, would be to lay herself open to surmises of all kinds.

'I thought it a pity that you should fall into a trap unwarned,' she answered, looking steadily away at the yew-trees. 'And it seemed to me that, for several reasons, your friends were not likely to warn you.'

'There I quite agree with you,' he retorted quickly. 'My friends would not have believed the story.'

'Perhaps not,' she said, outwardly unmoved.

'I am astonished that you did! I am astonished that you should have believed anything so absurd, Miss Bonamy!' he said severely. And then he stopped, for at that moment, as it hap-

pened, two people came round the flank of the church. The one was the curate; the other was Dr. Gregg. Kate looked at them, and her face flamed. The rector looked, and felt only relief. They would afford him an excuse to be gone. 'Ah, there is Mr. Clode,' he said, lapsing into cool indifference. 'I was just looking for him. I think, if you will excuse me, Miss Bonamy, I will seize the opportunity of speaking to him now.' And raising his hat, with a formality which the doctor took to be a pretence and a sham, he left her and walked across to them.

CHAPTER XIII.

LAURA'S PROVISO.

When a mine has been laid, and the fuse lit, and the tiny thread of smoke has begun to curl upward, it is apt to seem a long time —so I am told by those who have stood and watched such things —before the stones and earth fly into the air. So it seemed to Stephen Clode. The curate looked to see an explosion follow immediately upon the rector taking the decisive step of turning out the sheep. But week after week elapsed, until Christmas was some time gone, and nothing happened. Mr. Bonamy, with a lawyer's prudence, wrote another letter, and for a while, perhaps out of regard to the season, held his hand. There was talk of Lord Dynmore's return, but no sign of it as yet. And Dr. Gregg snapped and snarled among his intimates, but in public was pretty quiet.

It was noticeable, however, that the rector was invited to none of the whist-parties which were a feature of the town life at this season; and to those who looked closely into things and listened to the gossip of the place it was plain that the breach between him and the bulk of his parishioners was growing wider. The rector was much with the Hammonds, and carried his head high —higher than ever, one of his parishioners thought, since a talk she had had with him in the churchyard. The habit of looking down upon a certain section of the town, because they were not quite so refined as himself, because they were narrow in their opinions, or because the Hammonds looked down upon them, was growing upon him. And he yielded to it none the less because he was all the time dissatisfied with himself. He was conscious that he was not acting up to the standard he had set himself on

coming to the town. He was not living the life he had hoped to live. He visited his poor and gave almost too largely in the hard weather, and was diligent at services and sermon-writing. But there was a flaw in his life, and he knew it; and yet he had not the strength to set it right.

All this Mr. Clode might have observed—he was sagacious enough. But for the time his judgment was clouded by his jealousy, and in his impatience he fancied that the rector's troubles were passing away. Each visit Lindo paid to the Town House, each time his name was coupled with Laura Hammond's, as people were beginning to couple it, chafed the curate's sore afresh and kept it raw. So that even Stephen Clode's self-restraint and command of temper began to fail him, and more than once he said sharp things to his commanding-officer, which made Lindo open his eyes in unaffected surprise.

Clode began to feel, indeed, that the position was becoming intolerable; and though he had long ago determined that the waiting-game was the one he ought to play, he presently—in the first week of the new year—changed his mind.

Lindo had announced his intention of devoting the afternoon—it was Wednesday—to his district; and, taking advantage of this, the curate thought he might indulge himself in a call at the Town House without fear of unpleasant interruption. He would not admit that he had any other motive in going there than just to pay a visit; which he certainly owed. But in truth he was in a dangerous humour. And, alas! when he had been ushered along the thickly carpeted passage and entered the drawing-room, there, comfortably seated in the half-light before the fire, the tea-things gleaming beside them, were Laura and the rector!

The curate's face grew dark. He almost felt that Lindo, who had really been driven in by the rain, had betrayed him; and he shook hands with Laura and sat down in complete silence, unable to trust himself to answer the rector's cheery greeting by so much as a word. It was all he could do to say 'Thank you,' when Miss Hammond asked him if he would take tea. She, of course, saw that something was amiss, and felt not a little awkward between her two friends. But luckily the rector remained ignorant and at his ease. He saw nothing, and went on talking. It was the best thing he could have done, only, unfortunately, he had to do with a man whom nothing in his present mood could please.

'I am glad you have turned up at this particular moment,' Lindo said, 'for I want your opinion. Miss Hammond says that I am pauperising the town by giving too much away.'

'If you are half as generous at our bazaar on the 10th,' she retorted, 'you will do twice as much good.'

'Or half as much evil!' he said lightly.

'Have it that way if you like,' she answered, laughing.

The curate set his teeth together in impotent rage. They were so easy, so unconstrained, on such excellent terms with one another. When Laura, who was secretly quaking, held out the toast to him and let her eyes dwell for an instant on his, he looked away stubbornly. 'Were you asking my opinion?' he said in a voice he vainly strove to render cold and dispassionate.

'To be sure,' said the rector, stirring his tea and enjoying himself. 'Miss Hammond is not impartial, you see. She is biassed by her bazaar.'

If he had known the strong passions that were at work on the other side of the tea-table! But the curate had his back to the shaded lamp, and only a fitful gleam of firelight betrayed even to Laura's suspicious eyes that he was not himself. Yet, when he spoke, Lindo involuntarily started, so thinly veiled was the sneer in his tone. 'Well, there is one pensioner, I think, you would do well to strike off your list,' he said. 'He does not do you much credit.'

'Who is that? Old Martin at the Gas House?'

'No; the gentleman at the Bull and Staff!' replied the curate bluntly.

'At the Bull and Staff? Who is that?'

'Felton.'

For a moment the rector looked puzzled. He had almost forgotten the name of Lord Dynmore's servant. Then he coloured slightly. 'Yes, I know whom you mean,' he said, taken aback as much by the other's unlooked-for tone as by the mention of the man. 'But I did not know he lived at the Bull and Staff. It is not much of a place, is it?'

'I should say that it was very nearly the worst house in the town!' retorted the curate.

'Indeed! I will speak to him about it.'

'I would speak to him about getting drunk, if I were you!' Clode replied, with a short laugh. 'He is drunk six days in the week; every day except Saturday, when he comes to you and

pulls a long face over a clean neckcloth. He is the talk of the town!'

The rector stared, naturally wondering what on earth had come to the curate to induce him to speak so strongly. He was rather surprised than offended, however, and merely answered, 'I am sorry to hear it. I will speak to him about it.'

'Who is this person?' Miss Hammond asked hurriedly, turning to him. 'I do not think that I know any one in the town of that name.' The subject seemed to be a dangerous one, but anything was better than to leave the curate free to conduct the discussion.

The curate it was, however, who answered her. 'He is a *protégé* of the rector!' he said, with a laugh that was openly offensive. 'You had better ask him.'

'He is a servant of Lord Dynmore,' Lindo said, speaking to her with studious politeness, and otherwise ignoring Clode's interruption.

'But why you find him board and lodging at the Bull and Staff free, gratis, and for nothing,' interposed the curate again with the same rudeness, 'passes my comprehension!'

'Perhaps that is my business,' said the rector, losing patience.

Both men stood up. Laura rose, too, with a scared face, and stood gazing at them, amazed at the storm which had so suddenly arisen. The curate's height, as the two stood confronting one another, seemed to give him the advantage; and his dark rugged face, kindling with long-repressed feelings, wore the provoking smile of one who, confident in his own powers, has wilfully thrown down the glove and is determined to see the matter through. The rector's face, on the other hand, was red; and, though he faced his man squarely and threw back his head with the haughtiness of his kind, his anger was mixed with wonder, and it was plain that he was at a loss to understand the other's ebullition or to know how to deal with it. There was a moment's silence, which Laura had not the presence of mind, nor the curate the will, to break. Then the rector said, 'Perhaps we had better let this drop for the moment, Mr. Clode.'

'As you will,' replied the curate recklessly.

'Well, I do will,' Lindo rejoined, with some *hauteur*. And he looked, still standing erect and expectant, as if he thought that Clode could not do otherwise than take his leave.

But that was just what the curate had not the slightest intention of doing. Instead, with a cynical smile, he sat down again.

His superior's eyes flashed with redoubled anger at this, which seemed to him, after what had passed, the grossest impertinence; but Mr. Clode in his present mood cared nothing for that, and made it very plain that he did not. 'Will you think me exacting if I ask for another cup of tea, Miss Hammond?' he said quietly.

That was enough to make the rector's cup run over. He did not wait to hear Laura's answer, but himself said, 'Perhaps I had better say good evening, Miss Hammond.'

'You will not forget the bazaar?' she answered, making no demur, but at once holding out her hand.

There was a faint note of appeal in her voice which begged him not to be angry, and yet he was angry. 'The bazaar?' he said coldly. 'Oh, yes, I will not forget it.'

And with that he took up his hat and went, feeling much as a man does who, walking along a well-known road, has put his foot into a hole and fallen heavily. He was almost more astonished and aggrieved than hurt.

When he was gone there was silence in the room. I do not know whether Laura had been conscious, while the two men wrangled before her, that she was the prize of the strife, and so, like the maidens of old, had been content to stand by passive and expectant, satisfied to see the best man win; or whether she had been too much alarmed to interpose. But certain it is that, when she was left alone with the curate, she felt almost as uncomfortable as she had ever felt in her life. She tried to say something indifferent, but for once she was too nervous to frame the words. And Mr. Clode, instead of assisting her, instead of bridging over the awkwardness of the moment, as he should have done, since he was the person to blame for it all, sat silent and morose, brooding over the fire and sipping his tea. At last he spoke. 'Well,' he said abruptly, turning his dark eyes suddenly on hers, 'which is it to be, Laura?'

He had never spoken to her in that tone before; and had any one told her that morning that she would submit to it, she would have laughed her informant to scorn. But there was a new-born masterfulness in the curate's manner which cowed her. 'I do not know what you mean,' she murmured, her face hot, her heart beating.

'I think you do,' he answered sternly, without removing his eyes from her. 'Is it to be the rector, or is it to be me, Laura? You must choose between us.'

She recovered herself with a kind of gasp. 'Are you not going a little too fast?' she said, trying to smile, and speaking with something of her ordinary manner. 'I did not know that my choice was limited to the two you mention. Or that I had to choose one at all.'

'I think you must,' was his only answer. 'You must choose between us.' Then, with a sudden movement, he rose and stood over her. 'Laura!' he said, in a different tone, in a low, deep voice, which thrilled through her and awoke feelings and emotions hitherto asleep. 'Laura, do not play with me! I am a man. Is he more? Is he as much? I love you with all my being! He cares only to kill time with you! Will you throw me over because he is a little richer, a little higher for the moment, because I am the curate and he is the rector? If so—well, tell me, and I shall understand you!'

It was not the way she had thought he would end. The force, the abruptness, the almost menace of the last four words took her by surprise and subdued her afresh. If she had had any doubt before which of the two men had her liking, she had none now. She knew that Clode's little finger was more to her than Lindo's whole hand; for, like most women, she had a secret admiration for force, even when exercised without much regard to good taste. 'You need not speak to me like that,' she said, in gentle deprecation of his manner.

He stooped over her. 'Laura,' he said, 'do you really mean it? Do you mean you will——'

'Wait, please,' she answered, recovering a little of her ascendency. 'Give me a little time. I want to think something out.'

But time to think was just what he feared—ignorant as yet of his true position—to give her; and his face grew dark and sullen again. 'No,' he said, 'I will not!'

She rose suddenly. 'You will do as I ask you now,' she said, asserting herself bravely, 'or I shall leave you.'

He gave way silently, and she sat down again. 'Sit down, please,' she said to him. He obeyed her. 'Now,' she continued, raising her hand so as to shade her eyes from the fire, 'I will be candid with you. If I had no other alternative than the one you have mentioned—to choose between you and Mr. Lindo—I—I should certainly prefer you. No!' she continued sharply, bidding him with her hand to keep his seat, 'hear me out, please.

You have not stated the case correctly. In the first place—well, you put me in the awkward position of having to confess that Mr. Lindo has made no such proposal as you seem to fancy. And, secondly, there are others in the world.'

'I do not care,' the curate exclaimed, his deep voice trembling with exultation—'I do not care though there be millions —now!'

She moved her hand, and for a second her eyes, full of a tenderness such as he had never seen in them before, met his. The look drew him from his seat again, but she waved him back to it with an imperious gesture. 'I said I would be candid,' she continued, 'and I intend to be so, though until a few minutes ago I never thought that I should speak to you as I am speaking.'

'You shall never repent it,' he answered fondly.

'I hope not,' she rejoined. But then she paused and was silent.

He sat waiting patiently for a while; but, as she still said nothing, he rose. 'Laura,' he said.

'Yes, I know,' she answered, almost abruptly. 'But candour does not come very easily, sir, under certain circumstances. Don't you know you have made me afraid of you?'

He showed that he would have reassured her in a most convincing manner. But, notwithstanding her words, she had regained her power and presence of mind, and she repelled him. 'Wait until you have heard what I have got to say,' she continued. 'It is this. I would not marry Mr. Lindo because he is a rector with a living and a position—not though he were six times a rector! But all the same I will not marry a curate! No,' she added in a lower tone, and with a glance which intoxicated him afresh—'not though he be you!'

He stood silent, looking down at her, waiting for more. Neither by word nor gesture did he express dissent. It is possible he already understood, and felt with her.

'To marry a curate,' she continued in a low voice, 'is, for a girl such as I am, failure. I have held my head rather high, and I have stood by and seen other girls married. Therefore to marry a curate, after all, would be the worst of failures. Are you very angry with me?' she continued quietly, 'or do you understand?'

'I think I understand,' he answered, with just a tinge of bitterness in his tone.

'And despise me? Well, you must. I told you I was going

to be candid, and perhaps it is as well—as well, I mean, that you should know me,' she added, apparently unmoved.

'I am content,' he answered, catching her spirit.

'And so am I,' she said. 'To no one else in the world would I have said as much as I have said to you. To no other man would I say, "Win a living, and I will be yours!" But I say it to you. Do as much as that for me and I will marry you, Stephen. If you cannot, I cannot.'

'You are very prosaic,' he replied, lapsing into bitterness again.

'Oh, if you are not content——' she retorted.

He did not let her finish the sentence. 'You will marry me on the day I obtain a living?' he asked.

'I will,' she answered bravely.

She was standing up now, and he too—standing where the rector had stood an hour before. She let him pass his arm round her waist, but when he would have drawn her closer to him, and bent his head to kiss her, she hung back. 'No,' she said, blushing hotly, 'I think'—with a shy laugh—'that you are making too certain, sir.'

'Do you wish me *not* to succeed?' he replied, looking down at her; and it must be confessed the lover's *rôle* became him better than nine-tenths of those who knew his dark, rugged face would have believed.

She shook her head, smiling.

'Then if you wish me success,' he replied, 'you must send me out with some guerdon of your favour.' And this time she did not resist. He drew her to him and kissed her thrice. Then she escaped from him and took refuge on the other side of the fireplace.

'You must not do that again,' she said, biting her lip and trying to look at him reproachfully. 'At any rate, you have had your guerdon now. When you come back a victor I will crown you, but until then we are friends only. You understand, sir?'

And, though he demurred, he presently said he understood.

(To be continued.)

ADVERTISING IN CHINA.

In the *Voyage of the Sunbeam* the late Lady Brassey translated from Brazilian newspapers certain advertisements of slaves for sale, remarking that the presence of announcements of such a kind in journals of standing showed, not only that the sale of slaves was carried on freely and openly in Brazil, but that Brazilian public opinion found nothing to object to in the practice. There can be little doubt, indeed, of the value to an inquiring sociologist of the advertising columns of a leading paper. Advertisements give unconscious, and therefore trustworthy, evidence of the current standards of intelligence, morality, and refinement, quite as much as of the prosperity or poverty of a country. It is not time wasted, then, to take up the advertisement-sheet of that comparatively modern institution the Chinese vernacular press, and see what light it throws on Chinese manners and morals.

In China proper there are at present four daily papers—one published at Canton, one at Tientsin, and two at Shanghai. Of these, the first is the only one not under foreign protection, and probably for this very reason its advertisement-sheet contains little of interest. It is largely occupied, in fact, by the puffs of an enterprising English druggist. The most characteristic advertisements are to be found, for those who have patience and eyesight, in the *Shên Pao*, or *Shanghai Gazette*. This paper was started in 1872 by an English resident as a commercial speculation. The native editor was given practically a free hand, while immunity from mandarin resentment was secured by the foreign ownership. In consequence the new venture, when its merits were once understood, became a Cave of Adullam for all Chinamen with a grievance. It took, in fact, the place of the indigenous 'nameless placard.' What that was (and is) the unfortunate foreign settlers in the Yangtse valley know only too well. If a Chinaman considers himself wronged, and believes that the wrongdoer has the ear of the 'parent of his people,' the local magistrate, he does not—for that were folly—go to law. Nor does he lie in wait for his adversary and knife him surreptitiously—your true Chinaman is far too prudent for that. Early some morning appears on a convenient and conspicuous wall, by choice in the near neighbourhood of the

offender, a full and particular, though possibly not over-true, account of his transgression, the whole professedly written by a Friend to Justice. Precisely how far in the direction of scurrility the writer will venture to go depends on the amount of support he can expect from public opinion. If the party attacked be the self-denying Sisters of Mercy with their hospitals and *crèches*, or the Catholic missionaries (who, *pace* the correspondent of *Truth*, are not beloved by the Chinese), then any amount of filthy abuse may be indulged in with comparative impunity. Officialdom, on the other hand, must only be impugned in general terms. To say that 'every civilian has three hands, every army officer three feet'—in other words, to impute venality to the magistrates and cowardice to the military—is a stale truism which no official would venture to confute by a beating; but if the Friend of Justice indicts some individual magistrate by name, as he sometimes does, then matters will be made serious for him—when he is caught. Now, it very soon occurred to the Friends of Justice aforesaid that, all things considered, it would be much more satisfactory if the necessary reviling could be performed without any of the unpleasant consequences usually found to result from manuscript placarding. Accordingly they hastened to patronise the new press, protected as it was by the still powerful foreigner. Of course, the obscene lies directed against foreign missionaries were inadmissible, and too luxuriant abuse was pruned down. Still, enough remained to furnish forth a crop of libel actions had China been blessed with a Lord Campbell, and to keep several deserving barristers from starvation if the genus had been known in China. For many weeks the columns of the Shanghai paper a few years ago were adorned with the portrait of a bespectacled and befeathered mandarin. Above the portrait appeared the legend, 'He still wears a red button and a peacock's feather'—as who should say, He still styles himself a Right Honourable and a K.C.B. Below the portrait was the indictment, commencing with this promising sentence: 'Behold a cashiered Intendant of Hupeh, a man without a conscience, an avaricious schemer, one whose vileness is patent to all!' Then followed names and details, which it were tedious to repeat. The defendant, if we may so regard him, had overdrawn his account at his pawnbroker's, and, as an official of his degree might do, had repudiated the debt. The sole redress the plaintiff could obtain was the pleasure of seeing his enemy posted everywhere as 'expelled from the Service, leaving a legacy of disgrace to his

descendants, ashamed of himself, but still boasting of his rank.' The moral to us seems, How very much more lively, and to novelists of the Charles Reade school more valuable, would the columns of the *'Tiser* be if English pawnbrokers were allowed to advertise their transactions and libel their customers in this very outspoken fashion!

Here is another advertisement of the same class, but of wider interest:—

A Husband in search of his Wife.

In July, 1878, I, Chang Shan-ch'un, of Wu-chang, married the daughter-in-law of one Wang, a girl whose maiden name had been Kung, in my native district, and marriage-papers were drawn up in evidence. We lived together as husband and wife in kindness and affection for seven years, without any break in our friendly relations. My wife is 27 years old this year. My nephew was transferred the year before last to Tientsin by H.E. Li Hung-chang, and invited me to accompany him, which, owing to the strong opposition of my wife, I did not do. Last June, however, I followed my battalion to their quarters near the West Gate of Shanghai. This March we removed to the Hui-fang Lou, when, it seems, my wife, under the pseudonym of Chou Ai-ch'ing (*Chou l'Amoureuse*), began to frequent the Ti-i teahouse, a circumstance of which I was at the time in total ignorance. Later on a Huchou man, whose name I do not know, went privately with my wife to a temple to burn incense. He had the effrontery to wear a blue button and the medallion and beads of an official. This went on until at eight o'clock on the evening of the 17th instant my wife secretly fled from our house taking with her a bundle. I cross-questioned the nurse and so became acquainted with the foregoing facts.

I cannot control my wrath and bitterness. My wife has, it is plain, been enticed away by this rascal's deceit. How, I wonder, can a mere tailor's block like this succeed in beguiling a girl who has a lawful husband? Surely he has not law or justice before his eyes. It is on this account that I am advertising. Should any kind-hearted gentleman who can do so give me information by letter, I will reward him with twenty dollars; should he bring her back, I will gratefully give him forty. I will most certainly not eat my words. His kindness and benevolence for a myriad generations, to all eternity, shall not be forgotten.

But before my eyes is still my one-year-old baby-girl, wailing and weeping night and morning. Should that rascal presume on his position and obstinately retain her as his mistress, not only to all eternity shall he be infamous, not only shall he cut short the line of his ancestors and be bereft of posterity, but we three—father, son, and little daughter—will risk our lives to punish him. I hope and trust he will think thrice, and so avoid an after-repentance. I make this plain declaration expressly.

Letters may be addressed to No. 4 Hui-fang Lou.

Note the neat allusion to 'my nephew,' who is under the patronage of no less a person than His Excellency the Viceroy of Chihli.

About the same time appeared in the *Shên Pao* an advertisement which I translated for its English contemporary, the *North*

China Herald. I was gratified, some months later, to find that it had, by the obliging instrumentality of the Central News Agency, been disseminated among various home papers. But the agent (to whom I make my bow) did not consider the form of my translation suited to English ideas. In my anxiety to preserve the spirit of the original I had translated it literally, so that the heading ran 'Beware of incurring Death by Thunder!' The agent (I humbly acknowledge the extent of his erudition) knew that death, if it happens at all under these circumstances, is not, in England nowadays, ascribed to thunder. He therefore altered the heading to 'Death by Lightning.' Last century one of the Jesuit missionaries in Peking (I think Père Amyot) complained, but not quite as deferentially as I have done, of similar editing. 'I wrote,' he said, 'in my letters to Paris of the drawbacks to Peking streets, describing them as full of dust in winter and a sea of mud in summer. My publisher objected to this as contrary to universal—that is, to his—experience, and has made me speak of the mud in winter and the dust in summer, as though Peking were Paris.' In Chinese thunderstorms the lightning plays a comparatively innocuous part: its sole use is to enable the offended deity to see his victim and so wield the bolt with deadlier effect. I had to thank the agent for other corrections which were no doubt, from a literary point of view, great improvements, but were not a closer rendering of the original. That ran as follows:—

Beware of incurring Death by Thunder!

Your mother is weeping bitterly as she writes this for her boy Joy to see. When you ran away on the 30th of the 8th moon the shop-people came and inquired for you, and that was the first news we had. I nearly died of fear at the time, and since then sleep and food have been in vain, and I am weeping and sobbing still. The letter that came from beyond the horizon I have, but it gives no place or abode where I might seek you. I am now at my last gasp, and the family has suffered for many days from grievous insults. If you delay longer and do not return, I cannot, cannot bear it, and shall surely seek an end to my life, and then you will stand in peril of death by thunder. If you come, no matter how, everything is sure to be arranged. I have thought of a plan, and your father may still be kept in ignorance. My life or death hangs on the issue of these few days. Only I pray that all kind-hearted people everywhere will spread this abroad so that the right person may hear of it. So will they lay up for themselves a boundless store of secret merit.

Written by one in Soochow city.

The hue and cry is constantly raised in the columns of the *Shên Pao* and its contemporaries. Advertisements of this class

are headed, as a rule, by two characters, *hsün jen*, 'search for a man.' The latter of these two is, under ordinary circumstances, written much like the Greek Λ; but where the 'man' is in the honourable position of a husband or a son the character is inverted, either to attract attention, or, as some Chinese explain it, 'because a man, you see, cannot run away on his head.' Some of these 'searches' would seem as pathetically hopeless as was that of the aged father of one of the English officers murdered in Peking in 1860. Here, for instance, is a tragedy of that very year (the advertisement appeared some seventeen years later):—

The lady Huang, *née* Ssă-ma, of Yu-heng Hall, at Wuch'êng, seeks for her son. This son, Nien-tsu ('Mindful of Ancestors'), was carried off by the Taiping rebels on Christmas Day, 1860. He was 14 years old at the time, and his father, Ts'ai, was dead. All these years nothing has been heard of him, and his mother's suspense and trouble have been very heavy. Should any who know of his whereabouts do her the honour to write and inform her, she will, as she is bound, gratefully recompense them. If they can bring him back to his home she will reward them with a hundred pieces of foreign money. She will assuredly not eat her words. A quest.

Wu-ch'êng, 'The Five Ramparts,' is a well-known country-town near Hui-chou, whence the Fychow teas take their name, and where Robert Fortune procured for Assam the tea-plants in the celebrated journey which has had such mixed results. It all but ruined the China tea-trade, but it supplied the local colour for 'By Proxy.' The clan or family of Huang ('Yellow')—a common enough surname elsewhere—owns a great part of Wu-ch'êng. This family was represented for four generations in the Han-lin, the Academy of China, and forms part, therefore, of the strange literary aristocracy of that cultured empire. This wandering heir would rank (in that benighted land) with the cadets of Courtenay or the descendants of the Plantagenet.

Many other proofs of the devastation caused by the Taiping rebellion are to be found in the advertisement-sheets of to-day. Here is one which, at the same time, is an unconscious satire on the difficulties of communication; for Wuhsi, where the advertiser lives, is in the next province to Anch'ing:—

Chang Mei-erh, formerly in the registry office of the District Magistrate of Wuhsi, was carried off by the rebels in 1863. His wife, *née* Shao, has rebuilt their house on the old site, and employs a man to conduct the business for her. She is informed that her husband is living at Anch'ing, outside the West Gate. Should any gentleman do her the favour to conduct him back to his home, she will be greatly indebted to him.

But the persons advertised for are not all victims of these old-time troubles. The kidnapper has something to answer for, or ill-advised curiosity.

Notice.

My second son, Huai-po, a boy of tender years and no great parts, was educated at home in the country and had no knowledge of the world. Even when we came to Shanghai last year he stayed indoors learning his lessons, and never left the house till one day, the 28th July last, when he went out to get cool and never returned. We searched everywhere for him, but found no trace. I ought to say that the boy was altogether unacquainted with the customs of Shanghai and the character of the people, and I fear that he has been decoyed away by scoundrels for some bad purpose. The gold charms he was wearing and the silver he had about him will not, I am afraid, be sufficient for his necessities; on the contrary, he will be borrowing money or doing something of the kind. In that case I will not hold myself liable. Should any of my relatives or friends see him, I earnestly hope they will direct him to return at once, and so earn my gratitude.

[Here follow the prudent advertiser's name and address.]

In the following advertisement, headed (despite its object) 'Search for a Man,' the 'man' is not inverted, probably because he is only an insignificant slave-girl:—

Lost to-day, a slave-girl named Feng-p'ing ('Phœnix Screen'), aged just 14, a Cantonese, dark-complexioned, with slightly protrusive front teeth, dressed in a tunic of blue cotton, with a green wadded cotton jacket, black cotton drawers, white stockings, and cloth shoes, but with no other garments. She went out this morning at eight o'clock to buy things and has not been seen to return. Should anyone detain her and bring her back, I will recompense him with ten large pieces of gift silver.

'Gift silver' is literally 'flowery red silver,' for dollars given as presents should bear some device cut in red paper, usually the character for 'joy redoubled.'

If I purposed to provide in the course of this one article an adequate description of the whole contents of an average advertisement-sheet of the *Shên Pao*, I should have been obliged to allow less space than I have done to the 'hue and cry.' Taking a number of the paper at random, I find that it contains 116 advertisements, which may be classified thus:—

Native theatres, 3; sales by auction, 9; lotteries, 18; medicines and medicos, 32; new books and new editions, 15; 'hue and cry,' 4; houses to let, 3; steamers to leave, 4; general trade announcements, 17; miscellaneous, 11.

Nearly half the general trade announcements and about a third of the 'miscellaneous' are foreign, as are all the sales by auction

and a fair proportion of the medicines. The rest may be taken as purely native.

The remarkable preponderance of gambling and medical advertisements will be noticed at once; indeed, I cannot help thinking that (except in the matter of theatres) the proportions which the various entries in this list bear to one another correspond pretty closely to the ingredients of a Chinaman's character. The one thing which he will import, whether into his country or himself, in practically unlimited quantities, is physic. China is the happy hunting-ground of the patent-medicine man. This is no new discovery, for more than one foreign drug company has flourished, and is flourishing, through the fact. With a spirit of reciprocity which she does not exhibit on all occasions, China returns the kindness of Messrs. Eno, Fellows, Beecham, &c., by exporting her medical men (save the mark!)—chiefly, I am happy to say, to the Pacific Slope. There in particular the next ruling passion of the Chinaman is given full play, if it be true that clauses are still inserted into labour contracts permitting the labourer to spend his evenings at 'the card house.' Every Chinaman is at heart a gambler, and though his native lotteries (one of them somewhat strangely known as 'the White Pigeon') are spasmodically interdicted by his authorities, nothing prevents him from having a monthy fling at the Manila Lottery, that chief support of Philippine finance. But with all his fondness for plunging and quackery he is—the better sort of him—a reading animal, and 13 per cent. of advertisements devoted to literature is no bad measure of the interest he takes in books.

The three theatres whose advertisements appear day after day in the Shanghai native press are all situated within the limits of the Foreign Settlements, and are an ingenious combination of indigenous and imported ideas. Until their introduction by Europeans some thirty years ago, the natives of Central China were accustomed to associate theatrical entertainments with some 'joyous affair,' such as marriage, the birth of a son, promotion in the Civil Service, or a successful speculation. A wealthy individual or guild provided the spectacle and, reserving the best places for the invited guests, admitted the company without charge to the rest of the space. Usually the entertainment was held in the courtyard of a temple or guildhall, on a permanent stage advanced from the centre of one side, and ten feet or so above the entrance to the enclosure. Opposite stood the shrines of the *p'u-sa*, or

presiding deities, on either hand were galleries for the guests and their families, while the area was free to all. If no temple or guildhall was available, a rough platform roofed with matting was hastily erected on some vacant land, and the performance little less enjoyed. The actors were provided, on application, by a theatrical company, and varied in number from twenty or thirty to two or three hundred. The cost to the donor would in like manner range from 18 to 100 dollars a day—or from 3*l.* to 16*l.*

Such to this day remain the theatrical entertainments of China, except at a few places like Shanghai, where the influence of foreigners has been able to overcome a natural antipathy on the part of the Chinese public to pay for a spectacle. At Shanghai the scale of charges is as follows: Boxes, 6 dollars; stalls, per head, 40 cents (16*d.*); pit, 20 cents; front gallery, 10 cents; back gallery, 5 cents. These translations are, it is perhaps as well to add, only approximate. The general plan of the theatres there resembles to a great extent the courtyard of a guildhall as already described; only in this case the whole is roofed in and lighted with the 'self-lit flame' (gas or electricity), and no space is wasted on unappreciative *p'u-sa*. The stalls, more literally 'the middle seats,' consist of benches with attendant tables, on which cakes, samshoo, and melon-seeds are served to all who call for them. A more elaborate feast can be had in the private boxes, a ruder repast in the pit. In fact, it might be better to describe these places as music-halls rather than theatres, seeing there is no stint of drinking but of music or acting little or none. That, at least, is the impression a prejudiced Westerner brings away: to the native playgoer they are the supreme delight of the Paris of China, Shanghai.

Two performances are given daily, a *matinée* from one to four, and an evening performance from six till midnight. From first to last some twenty plays may be acted, no unnecessary time being lost by intervals between each. As at this rate even the considerable *répertoire* of Chinese playwrights would not long suffice, it frequently happens not only that the same house repeats its plays on successive nights, but that the same piece or pieces are announced for the same evening by more than one theatre. And this brings me back to the *Shên Pao* and its advertisements, which I have somewhat neglected. The names of the three theatres ('tea gardens' they prefer to call themselves) are the

Old Red Cassia Tree, the Chant to the Rainbow, and the Celestial Fairies'. Here is one day's programme of the last of these :—

THE FAIRIES' TEA GARDEN.

The 9th of the 10th moon : Daylight performance.

An Empress' End. The Assault on Hui-chou City.
The Dragon's Cloak. The Jasper Terrace.
The Pass of Hao-t'ien.
The Women's Shop. Snow in July.
The Roll of Pure Officials.
Battle in the Five Quarters.

The 9th of the 10th moon : Evening performance.

The Pacifying of the Northern Seas. Two Faithful unto Death.
Story of a Changed Sword. Abuse of Ts'ao-Ts'ao.

A new play dealing with Civil and Military Officials,

TEN TIMES A WARRIOR.

The Lamp of the Precious Lotus. The Mount of Fragrance.
White Sparrow Temple. Visiting the Ten Fanes.

The subjects of these are drawn, some from mythology, more from history, a few from everyday life. The 'Dragon's Cloak,' for instance, describes the investiture by his army of Chu Yuan-chang, the celebrated founder of the Ming Dynasty, in 1368; the 'Jasper Terrace,' the journeyings of the ancient emperor Mu (B.C. 985), and his visit to the Kunlun Mountains and the fairy Queen-mother of the West. The 'Story of the Changed Sword' and the 'Abuse of Ts'ao-Ts'ao' are both taken from the 'Record of the Three Kingdoms' (A.D. 220–265), a well-known work, which, though it exonerates the Chinese from a certain apparent want of idealism, hardly deserves to be called, as some would call it, the prose Iliad of China. 'Visiting the Ten Fanes' depicts the passage through the Ten Hells of Kuan-yin, Goddess of Mercy, and Buddhist counterpart of the Regina Cœli.

The auctioneers' notices, which come next in the advertisement-sheet, refer for the most part to the so-called auction sales of cargoes imported from Europe and disposed of piecemeal in Shanghai. Some few have relation to that more familiar domestic form which makes the auction a charm to young and a pain to old householders at home. In China we waste but little sympathy over a sale of our own or our neighbour's effects. Population is so fleeting that one has little time to become attached to a clock-case or an armchair. Both are parted with with no more regret

—even to a Chinaman—than the inevitable depreciation in value must occasion. The only interest which the advertisements of these auction sales possess lies perhaps in the quaint mixture of Chinese and Chino-English which they exhibit. To take one at random and submit it to the somewhat unfair process of literal translation:—

Li pai 3 slap sale.

A statement determined on li pai 3 ten stroke clock this hong slap sell wei ssă kia large small bottle p'i liquor large small bottle pa te liquor every colour chin liquor pa te hun she li po lan tien large small bottle hsiang ping lu mu such goods this divulged.

Lung mao hong statement.

I should observe, as some explanation of this, I fear, unintelligible jumble, that the Chinese possess a sufficient system of punctuation, but seldom condescend to use it; that *li pai* ('rites and reverence'), a coined term to represent our 'public worship,' has come to mean 'a week,' and that no Chinese tradesman or, as a rule, foreign merchant in China, designates his 'hong' or firm by his own or his partner's surname, but gives it some fanciful title, such as The Sign of the Lung-mao—'Opulence and Luxuriance.' Nevertheless, it may be as well to adjoin the equivalent advertisefrom the contemporary English paper:

Auction.—The undersigned will sell by auction on Wednesday, at 10 o'clock, at their salesroom, an assortment of whisky, beer, and porter in pint and quart bottles, gin of various brands, port wine, sherry, brandy, champagne (pints and half-pints), rum, etc., etc.—Mackenzie & Co., auctioneers.

It would be unfair to deal in a few lines, or even paragraphs, with the lottery and medical advertisements, to say nothing of the various miscellaneous announcements. One class of the latter, that relating to fortune-telling, would deserve a chapter to itself. I will content myself, and end this ower lang but incomplete paper, by reproducing here two medical advertisements of considerable standing. The general style of the puff medical is well illustrated by the former of these, which recounts the discovery and properties of the 'Fairy Receipt for Lengthening Life.' The whole production is worthy of the genius who evolved Mother Seigel and her syrup:—

This receipt has come down to us from a physician of the Ming Dynasty. A certain official was journeying in the hill country when he saw a woman passing southward over the mountains as if flying. In her hand she held a stick, and she was pursuing an old fellow of a hundred years. The mandarin asked the woman,

saying, 'Why do you beat that old man?' 'He is my grandson,' she answered; 'for I am 500 years old, and he 111; he will not purify himself or take his medicine, and so I am beating him.' The mandarin alighted from his horse, and knelt down and did obeisance to her, saying, 'Give me, I pray you, this drug, that I may hand it down to posterity for the salvation of mankind.' Hence it got its name.

It will cure all affections of the five intestines and derangement of the seven emotions, constitutional debility, feebleness of limb, dimness of vision, rheumatic pains in the loins and knees, and cramp in the feet. A dose is ¼ oz. Take it for five days, and the body will feel light; take it for ten days, and your spirits will become brisk; for twenty days, and the voice will be strong and clear, and the hands and feet supple; for one year, and white hairs become black again, and you move as though flying. Take it constantly, and all troubles will vanish, and you will pass a long life without growing old. Price per bottle, 3*s.* 3*d.*

Besides the numerous advertisements of cosmetics are some which deal with that other feminine vanity of China, the tiny feet. These 'golden lilies,' that will go into a shoe which a conscientious nurse at home would reject for a year-old baby, are not acquired without a certain inconvenience, not—as, however, the fair owner would most desire—to put too fine a point on it. Hence the justification of advertisements such as this:—

Medicine for Swathed Feet. Beware of Imitations.

Our Lily-print Powder has been sold for many years, and may be described as miraculous in its effects. By its use the foot can be bound tight without any painful swelling, and yet be easily brought to a narrow point. Price per bottle, twopence. Also our Paragon Powder, the sole cure for fetid sores caused by binding. Threepence a bottle. Sold only at Prince's Drug Store, at the sign of Great Good Luck in Pao-shan ('Precious and Moral') Street, at Shanghai. All others are imitations.

The Chinese advertiser does not lack imagination: in picturesqueness he can give points to his Western rival. What he needs is a Herkomer or a Millais. So far he has been hampered in his flights by the limitation of the wood block: when he begins to import canvases and R.A.s, then, ah, then! Pears, and Eno, and Beecham, and the Monkey Brand that won't wash clothes will have to lay in a new stock of poets and men of letters if they would vie successfully with the Chinese uses of advertisement.

DETECTED CULPRITS.

Mr. Archibald Bunby, M.A., the Principal of Redhurst, had very distinct views on the subject of French masters. 'If I may speak,' he would say solemnly, with a boy-reproving look in his eye, 'from some twenty years' experience, I should say that the most perfect French master which can be procured from the scholastic agents is an Englishman who has spent the greater part of his life abroad. The ordinary Frenchman has no discipline; the ordinary Englishman has a bad accent.' This generally impressed, as it was intended to impress, the parent who heard it. Mr. Bunby was peculiarly skilful in managing parents.

'And have you succeeded in securing such a man?' the parent would ask. 'I have—with some difficulty, I confess—but I have done it. Our French master here is Mr. Paul Vane, who spent twenty years of his life in Paris. He is a fair cricketer, an earnest Evangelical Churchman, a non-smoker, and a disciplinarian, and he speaks three languages to perfection. He has had, of course, brilliant offers from our great public schools, but I don't think he will leave me. He has been here for three years, and I may say that his value to me is incalculable.'

Although Mr. Archibald Bunby stated that Vane's value was incalculable, it had been necessary for business purposes to fix it at something, and he had fixed it at 90*l.* a year, with board and residence. Vane had shrugged his shoulders and accepted the terms. When at the age of twenty-two he had found himself, somewhat unexpectedly, compelled to do something, at least temporarily, for a living, he had placed himself in the hands of some scholastic agents. They had sent him from time to time particulars of vacant posts, in blue ink, on thin paper; and from a careful perusal of some thirty of these notices Vane had come to the conclusion that an English teacher of French with no experience might have to wait some time before he got anything better than Mr. Bunby's offer. Mr. Bunby among his sterling qualities—he was rather fond of talking about his sterling qualities—included the businesslike habit of never paying more than was absolutely necessary for an article. His assistants were simply 'articles' to him. He ordered them from the scholastic agents just as he

ordered his boots from his bootmaker; and in both cases if the article did not fit, or got worn out, he replaced it by another. He spoke much more highly of Paul Vane when he was talking to a parent than he did when he was talking to Vane himself; and the friends of Paul Vane's early youth would have been somewhat surprised if they had heard him described as an Evangelical Churchman and a non-smoker. These were, however, virtues which Mr. Archibald Bunby had thrust upon him and compelled him to accept at the close of his very first interview with him. 'I do not want,' he had said, nervously stroking his unpleasant red beard, 'to inquire what your religious views are. My own views happen to be strictly Evangelical, and those are the views of the greater number of the parents of my boys. However, in this respect I have no right to limit you. I must simply insist on your attending service twice every Sunday at our little iron church.' It may be remarked, in passing, that tin churches, like tinned salmon, are not generally as good as the other kind. 'And lastly,' Mr. Bunby said, 'comes the most important point of all. While you are with me, Mr. Vane, you must be content to be a non-smoker. If my establishment were merely a preparatory school for little boys, I should say nothing about it; but I have an army class—young fellows on the verge of manhood—and with them example is everything. How can you tell them, as I shall expect you to tell them, that smoking is a filthy, dishonourable, and extravagant habit if they suspect that you yourself smoke?' Paul Vane put up with all this, but he did not like it. Nor had he the same high opinion of Archibald Bunby that Bunby had of him. But the brilliant offers which he was supposed to have received from public schools existed only in Bunby's imagination. Perhaps the real reason why Vane remained at Redhurst was because he had very fair prospects of soon relinquishing the profession altogether, and did not think it worth while to change for a short period. He was a good fellow on the whole, but it will be seen that he had his faults.

It happened that one night Vane was holding forth on the subject of Bunby in the master's sitting-room to his two colleagues, the classical and mathematical masters.

'The Plain Bun'—this was the name by which Mr. Archibald Bunby was generally styled—'is a fraud, the worst kind of a fraud—the kind that deceives itself. He has the same religious views, social views, scholastic views, as any parent with whom he

happens to be talking, and he honestly believes that it is all coincidence. He puts three of us into a small, mean sitting-room that has no parts or magnitude, and tells me almost with tears in his eyes that there is no sacrifice which he wouldn't make to give each of us a study to himself. And he believes it. Further, he believes that he himself is competent to teach Modern Languages——'

'And Mathematics,' put in the mathematical master snappishly.

'And Classics,' added the grey-headed, broken-down old classical master in a weary voice.

'Whereas,' continued Vane, 'he is not competent to do anything except to keep accounts, humbug parents, and sell soup and vegetables. Look at the way parents are humbugged by those beautiful letters, "M.A." They may belong to a scholar or to a fraud. In this case they belong to a fraud, because I've taken the trouble to look Mr. Archibald Bunby up in the Calendar. He got his B.A. degree by taking the lowest possible Botany Special (why, he doesn't even pretend to teach Botany!) and the lowest possible General; and he got his M.A. degree, of course, simply by paying for it, and without being required to pass any further examination. I know plenty of boys of fifteen who could do better—as far as examinations are concerned—than the Plain Bun ever did. We know this, but the poor humbugged parents don't know it—as a rule. That ignoramus bears the same title as a man who has taken high honours—yourself, for instance, Linton.'

'Don't speak of it,' said Linton, the old classical master, sadly. 'I did well in my youth, but I've been a mistake ever since. I've taught boys ever since—couldn't afford to do anything else—and I hate them!'

'Yes, you have hard luck, but I would sooner be you than be that arch-humbug Bunby. He makes *us* humbugs as well by his idiotic regulations. What is the use of trying to prevent us from smoking? You, Bradby, go over to Guildford almost every half, and what do you do when you get there?'

'I smoke,' said the snappish, red-headed little mathematician. 'I smoke, and I drink, and I play the marker at the Green Lion, as you know perfectly well. The Plain Bun says I go there to see relations, damn him!'

'And what do you do, Linton, about smoking?'

'You know. I don't want to be dishonest, but it's the one consolation I've got, and I only do it once a week. I walk far away every Sunday afternoon over the common, and I smoke two pipes.'

'And I,' Vane went on, 'am worse than either of you, for I smoke my pipe in the big shrubbery at the far end of the garden every single night I am here. We are three humbugs, manufactured by the arch-humbug——'

At this moment there was a knock at the door, and the school butler presented himself. 'Mr. Bunby's compliments, and he would be glad to speak to Mr. Vane, if convenient to him, at once in the study.'

'Down in a minute,' said Vane. 'I hope he won't want me for long,' he added to the others when the butler had disappeared. 'I must explain to him that he's keeping me from my pipe.'

'Do,' remarked Bradby grimly. 'He won't keep you after that.'

Mr. Bunby's study was very different to the common sitting-room of his assistant masters. It was much larger and loftier. It was not tastefully furnished, because Mr. Bunby did not happen to have any taste, but the carpet was soft and thick, there were several luxurious easy-chairs, and one or two elaborate and ingenious writing-desks to aid Mr. Bunby in the paths of scholarship. When Vane entered, the first thing he noticed was a sheet of crumpled white paper spread out in the centre of the central table, under the glare of the gas, while in the very centre of this sheet lay in all their naked hideousness two large cigars. They formed a kind of axis around which Mr. Bunby slowly revolved, clutching occasionally at his red beard as if in a spasm of indignation, or gazing at those two large cigars as if they had broken his heart.

'Vane,' he faltered—like most principals he could make his voice falter to perfection, and at any moment—'look at them! look at them!'

'I see,' said Vane—'cigars!' He might have added that, as far as one could judge from a casual glance, they were rather good cigars.

'On my soul, Vane!' said Bunby, 'I feel almost inclined to stop *all* half-holidays for ever and ever.' Vane had a horrible impulse to say 'Amen!' but he resisted it, and Bunby went on. 'This afternoon I went out for a walk, alone, and I suppose I had got about three miles away from Redhurst, when, coming

suddenly round a corner, I saw two of my army class, Stretton and Pilbury, sitting on a gate under my very nose—my very nose, if you please—smoking cigars!' Mr. Bunby, who had paused in his course to say this, now began once more to revolve round the table in a slow agony.

'Take a seat, Vane,' he continued. 'They threw their cigars away directly they saw me, but they were too late. I simply asked them quite calmly if they had any more, and Stretton, your favourite Stretton, whom you're always praising, produced from his pocket the two which you see there. He'd obviously been intending to make a practice of it. I found out that they had paid no less than one shilling each for those cigars—a perfectly absurd price to pay—at least, I should think so, but of course I don't pretend to know anything about that. I told them to go straight back to Redhurst, and that I would see them in my study when I returned.'

'And what have you done?' asked Vane.

'Well, that was the difficulty. What *was* I to do? I couldn't let that kind of thing go on. It was absolutely necessary to make an example; and yet I couldn't afford to lose two pupils. Besides, Pilbury has three brothers, all of whom ought to come here. I know you like Stretton, and think Pilbury's going to the dogs; but I disagree with you. I think otherwise. So I told Stretton that for some time past I had not liked his tone at all, and that I should ask his father to remove him at the end of the week. I gave Pilbury a severe lecture, and warned him against being led away by other boys, and finally said that, as I had nothing serious against him with the exception of this offence, I should pass it over. Now I hope you think that I've done right, as I always try to do. I should like to hear your opinion.'

Paul Vane was furious. Stretton was a high-spirited, plucky young fellow, after Vane's heart—thoughtless enough, but with nothing radically wrong in him, and willing to do anything—even to work hard—for a master who treated him fairly and sympathetically. Pilbury was two years older than Stretton, stupid and idle, and would never do any good.

'If you want my real opinion,' said Vane, 'I think that arrangement is most unjust. You ruin Stretton by taking away his character, and you let that thankless lout Pilbury go free. I do not think, myself, that you need expel either; but if you expel one, you must expel both.'

Mr. Bunby vehemently objected that Vane was talking nonsense. Two expulsions meant a very serious loss to him. He had no wish to ruin Stretton's career; but Stretton should have thought of that before he purchased those cigars. For some time Vane argued his point, but it was of no use. Mr. Bunby might want to hear an opinion, but that did not mean that he had the least intention of being influenced by it.

'It's not a bit of good for you to talk, Vane. I've told Stretton he's to go, and he *will* go; and that's my last word. I'd do a good deal to oblige you, but I can't let such offences as that go unpunished. I don't think I need detain you. I'm only sorry that you can't look at it in the right spirit, the spirit in which I myself look at it.'

Vane said nothing more just then; he hurried off to his bedroom to get his pipe and pouch, and then let himself out by the masters' door into the garden. In the concealment of the shrubbery, and over his first pipe, he vowed that if Bunby kept Pilbury and expelled Stretton he would himself send in his resignation.

But in the meantime the hand of destiny was at work.

Archibald Bunby felt himself so shocked and distressed by all that had happened that he felt he owed it to himself to take a little stimulant. He generally felt that he owed it to himself about this time of night, and he generally paid the debt. The stimulant was gin-and-water; and when a man drinks gin-and-water from preference you may conjecture something about his character. The first glass did him very little good, but the second enabled him to forget his present worries and lose himself in memories. He meditated over his old days at Cambridge. He had always been a very careful man, even when he was at college; but it had not been necessary for him to be quite as good an example then as now. He had, in fact, occasionally indulged himself with a little cheap dissipation. Gin was one of the factors of the dissipation; he remembered with sorrow that twice in those unregenerate days he had made himself a little drunk with gin. He had been a smoker too. He had smoked Manilla cheroots at threepence each, and how he had enjoyed them! And how hard he had found it at first to break himself of the habit of smoking! But he had done it. 'A will of iron,' Mr. Bunby murmured to himself, 'a will of iron.' And, with due consideration for the worry and annoyance that Stretton and Pilbury had caused him, he mixed himself a third glass of gin-and-water. As he sipped it

things began to appear more roseate, and he grew still more proud of himself. He remembered how he had given away all his smoking materials except the little silver cigar-cutter which he wore at the end of his watch-chain. A girl whom he had met in the race-week had given it him, together with her hand and heart. She had, however, married someone else. Still he felt a sentimental regard for the cigar-cutter. It must have been years since he had used it. Would it work now? But why ask that question, when there were no cigars on which to try it—except those two on the table. He had forgotten them, and now he picked one of them up—merely to try the cigar-cutter. Why could not Stretton and Pilbury have shown a little of the firmness which always had characterised himself?

He took another sip of the gin-and-water.

It was not as if they had his temptations. The principal of a private school, harassed and worried, *might* be tempted to try the solace of tobacco. Doctors would probably recommend it in such a case. It did not do to disregard what the doctors said. Cigars which cost a shilling each would be very good cigars. If left about they might prove to be a temptation to the butler. He must put them away.

In the meantime he took a longer sip at the glass by his side. Then he stared into the fire-place, and then he looked at the time. Everybody must have gone to bed. It was very hot in the house, and it would be delightfully cool in the shrubbery at the end of the garden.

Suddenly he sprang from his seat, gulped down the remainder of his gin-and-water, thrust the cigar which he had just snipped and a box of matches into his pocket, and rushed out into the garden. He tore down to the shrubbery as if there had been a train there which he was anxious to catch, and took up his position on a garden seat out of view of the house. Then slowly and deliberately he lit that cigar and smoked it. What bliss—what unholy bliss—it was!

His bliss would have been considerably less if he had known that about ten yards away from him Paul Vane was watching him with a joy so deep and overpowering that it threatened every moment to break out into loud and intempestive laughter. Vane waited until Bunby had finished his cigar and gone back to the house; then after a minute or two he himself returned, letting himself in at the masters' door by his latch-key. As he undressed

that night he formed a very pretty and dramatic little plan, and chuckled over it. 'No, you wicked old hypocrite,' he said to himself, 'I don't think you'll expel Stretton—I don't much think you'll expel anybody.' It did not strike Vane that there had been anything deceitful in his own conduct—that is, anything for which he himself was responsible. His own conduct, it seemed to him, was the natural result of Bunby's absurd regulations. If he was a humbug, as he had called himself that evening, it was not he, but Bunby, that was responsible.

On the following morning, at the commencement of work, Archibald Bunby and Paul Vane sat facing one another at opposite ends of the large class-room in which they both taught. Their respective classes were down at their seats preparing work. Paul Vane was writing in pencil a few sentences which he was intending to put up presently on the blackboard, to be turned into idiomatic French. Mr. Bunby was running through an ode of Horace, with the help of a 'Globe' translation which he kept carefully concealed. Throughout the room there prevailed that pin-dropping silence on which the principal of Redhurst prided himself.

Then Paul Vane pushed back his chair, making sufficient noise to attract Bunby's attention. He walked to the blackboard, and fixed it so that not only his own class but Mr. Bunby himself could see what was written on it. He paused a moment, and then wrote up the first sentence in a round legible hand.

'1. Why do you not smoke?—Because it is an expensive and very disgusting habit.'

Mr. Bunby's lips parted slightly, and he kept his eyes fixed on the blackboard. The two next sentences followed in quick succession:

'2. We ought always to set a good example to others.'

'3. Where were you last night?—I was in the shrubbery at the end of the garden. But why did you go there?'

This was altogether too much for Mr. Archibald Bunby. He did not know what might be coming next. He hurriedly pencilled a few words on a scrap of paper, folded it up, and sent it across by one of his own class to Paul Vane. Vane read it with inward glee but with no outward sign of emotion. It ran as follows:—

'You can tell Stretton that I have forgiven him at your intercession.—A. B.'

Vane slipped the note into his pocket, and added the next sentence on the blackboard.

'4. I had gone to look for moths, which always fly by night.'

Mr. Bunby gave a sigh of relief, and called up his own class to construe their Horace.

When morning-school was over, Vane sent a boy to fetch Stretton to him in the class-room, which was now available for a confidential interview, the boys being all outside in the playground.

'Stretton,' said Vane—and the triumph which he felt made him unusually magisterial in his manner—'I was pained and surprised to hear from Mr. Bunby last night that he had found it necessary to expel you. Your work and behaviour, as far as I have had an opportunity of judging them, had, however, up to this point given me every satisfaction; and in consideration of that I asked Mr. Bunby, as a personal favour to myself, to overlook your offence. You will be pleased to hear that he has done so.'

'Thanks awfully, sir,' said Stretton. 'I was fearfully cut up about it, but I thought you'd get me off, because——' He paused in some embarrassment.

'Why, my boy?' asked Vane kindly.

'Because, sir, you see, I knew that you thought the same way as I did about smoking?'

'How could you possibly know anything of the kind?'

'Well, I can hardly say.'

'But I insist.'

'Well, sir, after the Plain Bun—I mean, after Mr. Bunby had expelled me I didn't consider that I belonged to the school any more, or that I need trouble about the rules. And Pilbury hadn't given up his cigars when I gave up mine. So I got one of Pilbury's cigars last night, and let myself out through Wilkins's bedroom window. And I went down to the shrubbery to smoke it, and when I got there I saw——'

'Not another word,' said Vane hurriedly, 'not another word. I quite understand you. Of course I could explain everything to you, but I think it would be better simply to say nothing about it to any one.'

And Stretton thought so too.

THE BATTLE OF COPENHAGEN.

A DANISH ACCOUNT OF THE ACTION.

On March 12, 1801, a great British fleet got under weigh in the roads of Yarmouth. It consisted of twenty ships of the line and a large number of frigates, brigs, and bomb vessels. Its destination being Copenhagen, its course was laid for the Cattegat in the Danish waters. The fleet was under the command of Admiral Sir Hyde Parker; the renowned Nelson, the hero of the Nile, being second in command. On board the fleet was a land force consisting of a line regiment, two companies of rifles, and a detachment of artillery, the whole under the command of Col. Stewart; also a minister-plenipotentiary, Mr. Vansittard, whose mission it was to make a last attempt to induce Denmark to abandon the League of Armed Neutrality. He left the fleet at Skagen and proceeded in a fast sailing frigate direct to the Danish capital. But as the Danish Government refused any negotiations while England maintained her hostile attitude, he accomplished nothing, and soon after left Copenhagen accompanied by Drummond, the British Minister Resident at the Danish Court.

After a stormy passage the fleet was at last sighted above the entrance to the Sound, where it hovered for several days waiting for a fair wind before it attempted to force the passage of the fortress of Kronborg. At last a northerly wind sprung up during the night of March 29, and the following morning the whole fleet sailed with a fresh breeze towards the mouth of the Sound, which is commanded by the castle of Kronborg, the traditional Prince Hamlet's Castle, near the town of Elsinore, at the entrance to the strait that separates Denmark from the coast of Sweden. The Castle opened a brisk fire, but the fleet, after casting a few bombs into the town, prudently gave the castle a wide berth and sheered off to the Swedish coast, beyond the range of its guns. Although Gustavus IV. was a member of the Armed Neutrality League, no fortifications had been erected on the Swedish side to bar the passage of the hostile fleet. It was successfully accomplished, and towards nightfall the British Armada came to an anchor in a widely extended line between the Isle of Hveen and Copenhagen; the southern ships being within four miles of the Danish capital.

Although the fortress of Kronborg had not been able to hinder the passage of the fleet, yet it detained it for some days, while Parker was waiting for a fair wind. It was a precious time gained for the Danes, who worked day and night in preparing for the coming conflict.

Already in the month of January had the Danish Government, in view of the strained relations with England, commenced preparations to make her fleet effective, but even if time had been sufficient, it would have been impossible to man it, seeing that the great majority of Danish seamen were absent in distant seas in peaceable merchantmen, and had not yet had time to respond to the call of arms in defence of their country. Accordingly a makeshift was adopted. Along the sea front of the city were anchored a line of old men of war, condemned hulks, mastless and with the spar-deck cut away, the only top-hamper being a jury pole for signalling purposes and to show the pennant. Astern, of course, flowed the split flag of old Denmark, the *Danebrog*, a white cross in a red field. These hulks were moored fore and aft and in a position sufficiently removed from the city to protect it and the arsenals from the guns and bombs of the enemy.[1]

The water of the Sound is nowhere of considerable depth, and between Saltholm and the city a great shoal (the Middle ground) divides it in two channels, the eastern known as the Dutchdeep and the western as the Kingsdeep. To the west of this last is another shoal, called the Refshaleground, on the northern extremity of which is the strong fort or battery of the Threecrowns. In the Kingsdeep along this Refshale shoal the Danish line of defence had taken up its position. The first ship at the south was *Prövesteen* [touchstone], next to that *Vagrien*, then *Vylland*, *Dannebroge*, *Sjælland*, and *Holsteen*. Between these hulks, or blockships as they were called, were some frigates, prams, and a floating battery. Only the prams *Rensborg* and *Nyborg* and two small corvettes carried sails. *Sjælland* and *Holsteen* were still in the service, full-rigged ships but with no sails bent, for which there was indeed no use, as they, like the other Danish ships, were immovable, being moored fore and aft. *Sjælland* was a 74-gun ship; the hulks carried from 50 to 60 each, but as they all were stationary, only the starboard batteries could be used.

[1] Why we did not utilise the effective ships available is hard to say. To the last it was believed that England was not in earnest. The actual departure of the British fleet roused at last the nation to a sense of its danger.

The Northern Division, which did not take part in the action, was supported on one side by the Threecrown battery and on the other by the City Castle. It consisted of two great block ships, *Elephanten* 70, and *Mars* 64 guns, and a movable squadron of two line-of-battle ships, a frigate and two brigs, under the command of Steen Bille, the hero of Tripolis. The brunt of battle was borne by the immovable line of defence under Commodore Olfert Fisher, whose flag flew on the *Dannebroge*.

As soon as it was known in Copenhagen that the British fleet was off the Sound, business came at once to a standstill, and all able-bodied men hastened to make ready for the coming conflict. A noble enthusiasm prevailed among all classes. The love of the fatherland and the old flag were stimulated by the poets of the day, and recollections were awakened of our old victories in the days of Juel, Hvidfeldt, and Tordenskjold. Our last naval war terminated early in the eighteenth century, and we had enjoyed an uninterrupted peace for eighty years. The students of the University enrolled themselves as volunteers, a thousand strong, and were at drill from morning to night. Their band must probably have been the best ever known, as it comprised the whole orchestra of the Royal Theatre, who volunteered their services. Although there was a great scarcity of seamen, yet the manning of the ships was readily effected. All sorts and conditions of men reported themselves ready to fight for their flag and country; but these people who were thus to contend with the veterans of old England consisted, apart from militia and artillerists, mainly of farmers, artisans, and day-labourers—a scratch crew with hardly a sailor in twenty. It may safely be said the greater part had never handled a gun till a few days before the battle, during which the gun drill never ceased. A few of the officers had seen service in their younger days in the English and French navy, but the majority had yet to receive their baptism of fire. The number was limited, too, and most of the lieutenants were skippers and mates of merchant ships serving as such. The Commander-in-Chief, Olfert Fisher, was considered an able seaman, and had saved his ship in a hurricane at the Cape of Good Hope, while several foreign men-of-war went ashore with the loss of nearly their whole crews; but like most of his officers he had never smelt powder. To oppose with such material the splendid English battle-ships, manned by trained seamen inured to war, and commanded by the renowned Nelson himself, seemed indeed

an act of temerity, yet, in the result, it proved by no means so audacious as it appeared.

In the meantime, the British fleet remained where it was during two whole days; its time being occupied in ascertaining the depths of water in the Dutchdeep, the left channel looking south. At the edge of the Middle ground some small craft were anchored as a guide to the great battle-ships.

At a council of war held on board the *London*, Parker's flag-ship, several officers doubted that an attack upon the 'strong' position of the Danes could prove successful; but Nelson held a different opinion, and boldly offered to annihilate the Danish line of defence within an hour if the admiral would give him ten ships of the line and all the frigates and bomb-ships. The offer was accepted, and Parker added two more liners. In the course of the protracted battle, Sir Hyde is said to have remarked that it was a 'devilish long hour' that Nelson took to make his promise good. The council then discussed the plan of attack. Some of the captains were in favour of an attack on the northern wing, whilst others recommended an attack from the south. On the north, the Danish line was supported by the strong battery of the Three-crowns (sixty guns), to engage which, Nelson remarked, would indeed be 'to take the bull by the horns.' The southern division was much weaker and had no support, and an attack from that point would have the additional advantage of cutting Copenhagen off from any possible relief from Russia or Sweden. Nelson's opinion prevailed the more as a brisk southerly breeze had sprung up, which would be a fair wind for the British after having passed the eastern channel. During the night Nelson explored personally in an open boat the Dutchdeep with the leadline, strange to say, without being noticed or molested by the Danes. The day after, he made a fresh reconnaisance in the frigate *Amazon*. On the morning of April 1, his fleet weighed and stood southward. It comprised in all thirty-six sail, of 1,190 guns, with a crew of upwards of 7,000 men. Parker's division of eight ships of the line kept cruising between Hveen and the city, menacing the Danish northern wing.[1]

[1] The Danish line of defence carried 630 guns, and the Crown battery 60, manned by 5,063 men. The British had a decided superiority in ships, guns, and men, and had the action taken place in the open sea, the Danes would have been nowhere; but in this case the attacking party had to solve the difficult problem of navigating an intricate and little-known channel, running the risk of stranding several of their ships and unable to secure a retreat. Nelson's action was bold in the extreme; but he trusted to his lucky star, and it did not fail him.

Nelson made the passage of the Dutchdeep in short tacks, and as the wind died away he dropped his anchor about 8 P.M. at the southern end of the Middle ground, at the opening of the Kingsdeep, where the Danish ships were lying. The ships anchored close together, with just enough room to swing. Later in the evening, a mortar battery on the island of Amager threw some bombs, but soon ceased, under the mistaken idea that the bombs did not reach. It was, however, observed on board the *Prövesteen* that they fell pretty close, but all communications having been broken off with the shore, the captain of the Danish ship was unable to apprise the battery of the fact. A continued bombardment would, at any rate, have had the effect of keeping the enemy awake and on the alert. As it was, he had an undisturbed rest on the night preceding the battle. In the Danish ships, the raw crews were kept at their gun drill throughout the night.

Day had hardly broken when Nelson signalled his captains to repair on board the *Elephant* to receive his last instructions. The pilots were then summoned—that is, the merchant captains and mates who had been engaged in the Baltic trade, and who were supposed to be somewhat acquainted with the navigation of these narrow waters. But at the last moment, to the consternation of Nelson, none could be found to undertake the risk of piloting the huge ships in this narrow channel. Finally, the master of the *Bellona*, Alexander Briarley, was induced to assume this tremendous responsibility.

Accordingly, at half-past nine on the morning of Thursday, April 2, the fleet weighed anchor and approached the Kingsdeep, with a fair wind from the south-east, the current setting northward. On board the Danes everything was in order. Captain Riesbrich, of the *Vagrien*, who had served several years in the British Navy, regarded the coming of his old friends through the spy-glass. Turning to his officers he said, 'Gentlemen, let us to breakfast. We are sure of this meal, whatever may be the case with dinner.'

Shortly after Olfert Fisher's signal, 'Clear ship for action!' was displayed on the *Dannebroge*. The appearance of the British fleet was a magnificent spectacle as, favoured by a fresh and fair breeze, it neared the Danish line, ship after ship under their courses and with their topsails on the caps. The majestic procession was headed by the *Edgar* (74). As she came within range the *Prövesteen* sent her a broadside, accompanied with a

ringing hurrah. The *Edgar* returned the fire, and continued her course until she reached her appointed position opposite the centre of the Danish line. The next ship, the *Agamemnon*, was not so successful. She grounded on the shoal to starboard, and was unable to take part in the battle. The succeeding liners, *Russell* and *Bellona*, also grounded, but in such a position as to use their batteries with full effect against the opposite Danish ships. The rest of the fleet followed in splendid order, and, anchoring astern in such a way that they could slip their cables if necessary, took up their stations. It was a few minutes after ten o'clock when the first shot was fired from the Danish side, and within half an hour after the action was general on the whole southern line, for to this the English in the beginning limited their attack. Being masters of the movements of their ships, they did not neglect so decided an advantage. The Danish ships—immovable wooden walls—had to accept the situation as it was. Behind the British battle-ships a number of frigates and smaller craft, watching their chance, broke through the openings and raked the Danes wherever an opportunity offered.

The *Prövesteen* fought with two great liners, *Russell* and *Polyphemus*, and received besides several broadsides from the *Defiance* (Rear-Admiral Graves). Against these fearful odds the intrepid Lassen[1] and his brave first-lieutenant, Michael Bille, fought with splendid valour for hours. Twice the hulk got on fire, and twice the pennant was shot away, but the fire was got under and the pennant hoisted again. Close to *Prövesteen* the gallant Riesbrich fought the *Isis* and *Bellona*, while a frigate raked him astern. Nelson had hoped soon to have finished the southern blockships and then proceeded to the attack of the northern division, but, as Parker said, the hour proved 'devilish long,' and upon an officer remarking on the obstinate resistance, Nelson said, 'Yes; I suppose we must add an hour or two more, for these fellows fight well.'

In the city, as may well be supposed, few slept when day broke on that memorable morning. The churches soon filled with old men and women at prayer. The streets from which a glimpse of

[1] Captain Lassen, who, after the battle, when he appeared in the streets of Copenhagen, was the object of universal homage as the hero *par excellence* of the 'Bloody Thursday,' passed his last days in straitened circumstances, and died well-nigh forgotten. No statue commemorates his valour. Yet when he passed Amargertov the fishwives would rise and make him a deep courtesy.

the battle could be obtained were crowded, and on the church tower and the roofs of houses spectators clustered, watching, with mingled feelings of pride and terror, the progress of the great battle. The south-east wind drove the smoke in a mighty volume over the city, over which it hung in a murky pall, causing an unnatural darkness. The Danish hulks were almost invisible, but the top-hampers of the great English line-of-battle ships were plainly revealed, as their fire was given to leeward. The cannonade was deafening. Rarely, if ever, has it been granted to a people to witness a battle in which their sons, brothers, and husbands were engaged, and, as it were, under their own eyes.

During the first hour of the battle the pram *Rensborg*, misunderstanding a signal, withdrew behind the Danish line, but Captain Egede, as soon as he realised his mistake, forthwith warped his vessel out again and continued the battle till his ammunition was reduced to forty cartridges. The *Dannebroge*, Olfert Fisher's flagship, grappled with the *Glatton* and another liner till she got on fire. The Commodore then transferred his flag to the *Holsteen*; but Captain Braun continued to fight the burning *Dannebroge* till a ball carried away his right hand, when Captain Lemming assumed the command. Part of the crew was trying to extinguish the fire, while the rest fired broadside upon broadside and kept the enemy at bay. For a time the fire was kept under, but it broke out again, and the ship exploded shortly after the cessation of the battle. Death and destruction had raged on board as well as fire, and of a crew of 336 men no less than 270 were dead and wounded, which last, with the remaining survivors, were with great difficulty rescued by the assistance of friends and foes. Gradually the battle drifted northward, where the *Charlotte Amalia*, *Holsteen*, and *Indfödsretten* sustained a frightful fire from the combined hostile fleet. The *Indfödsretten* was assailed by four frigates and two bomb-vessels, and was raked fore and aft. Captain Thurah fell early, and, soon after, his next-in-command. Nevertheless the crew kept on firing while a message was sent to the Crown Prince (Prince Regent) to demand a fresh commander. Captain Schrödersee, naval adjutant to the Prince, who had retired from the navy owing to ill-health, at once volunteered his services. He had hardly put his foot on the quarterdeck when a cannon-ball cut him in two. Shortly after the *Indfödsretten* struck, being reduced to a complete wreck. It was now one o'clock, and the battle had raged without intermission for three hours. It was

then that Hyde Parker, not noticing any diminution of the Danish fire, began to doubt of a successful issue, and to be seriously concerned about Nelson and his ships. Accordingly he signalled his Vice-Admiral to discontinue the battle and draw off. Nelson was walking the quarterdeck of the *Elephant* in great excitement. A shot struck the mainmast, and the splinters flew about. 'It is a warm day, gentlemen,' he said, 'but, mark me, I would not be elsewhere for thousands.' Presently an officer reported that the signal No. 39 was flying from the *London* (Sir Hyde's flagship). He seemingly paid no attention, but continued his walk. The officer repeated the message, and asked if he should repeat the signal. 'No,' said the hero of the Nile; 'on the contrary, keep *my* signal for close action flying, and, if necessary, nail it to the mast. He then resumed his walk, swinging the stump of his arm, as was his habit when under great excitement. 'Break off the battle,' he repeated several times; 'I'll be damned if I do! I have only one eye, Foley, and may be allowed to be blind on occasion.' Placing a spy-glass to his blind eye, he said, 'Upon my word, I cannot see any signal.' The battle continued, none of the other ships noticing Parker's signal save the squadron of frigates to the north nearest to Parker's division. This squadron, commanded by the gallant Riou, had engaged the Threecrown battery, but now withdrew in obedience to Parker's signal. The *Amazon* had fought enveloped in dense smoke, but as she ceased firing the Danish battery got her in full sight, and presently played upon her with terrible effect. 'What will Nelson think of us?' said Riou as he was sitting on a gun-carriage, badly wounded, encouraging his men. His clerk was killed at his side, and another shot killed and wounded several marines. 'Come, children,' he cried, 'let us all die together!' At the same instant a shot made an end of his gallant life.

At half-past one o'clock the pram the *Nyborg* was so badly crippled that Captain Rothe had to cut his hawsers and draw out in a sinking condition, trying to reach the inner roadstead. On his way he descried the pram *Aggershuus* in a still more helpless state, if possible. Although himself in sore need, he succeeded in towing his comrade to the *Stubben*, where she soon sank, but the *Nyborg* managed to work herself to the boom near the Custom House, where she also foundered in shallow water, the upper part of the hull being above water. The crowd of spectators here realised how a Danish man-of-war is bound to appear when she

withdraws from battle—bowsprit gone, only a stump of a foremast, the cabin knocked to pieces, sail and cordage in rags, out of twenty guns only one serviceable, and her deck strewn with dead and wounded.

Splendid acts of bravery were displayed on both sides in this hard-fought battle. On the Danish side we remember with pride young Villemoes and the Norwegian, young Lieutenant Müller. The first youthful hero was only eighteen years old, and the youngest officer in the Danish Navy. Villemoes commanded a floating battery of twenty-four guns, which he managed to bring close to the counter of Nelson's flagship, the *Elephant*, to which he clung like a hornet, in spite of all Nelson's efforts to rid himself of his annoying little antagonist. He sent shot upon shot into the hull of the flagship, but the deadly fire of the marines on the poop at last compelled him to give in. Assisted by the current he contrived to warp his float away and bring it safely under the guns of the Threecrown battery. Nelson had watched with admiration the conduct of the gallant young officer, and addressed him in the most generous language upon young Villemoes being presented to him by the Prince Regent after the battle.

A little after two o'clock Commodore Fisher was compelled to leave the *Holsteen*, which was reduced to a wreck, and transfer his flag to the Threecrown battery, whence he henceforth directed the battle. At that time Steen Bille's squadron began to exchange shots with Hyde Parker's division, which had worked itself somewhat to the south against wind and current. The shots had little or no effect, as the distance was still considerable. The Danish fire now began to slacken perceptibly. The blockships were complete wrecks. On the most of them half the crews were dead and wounded, and the guns nearly all damaged and unserviceable; a further resistance was no longer possible. Brave Captain Lassen, who had fought for four hours from four to five English ships, at last struck, and left the *Prövesteen* literally riddled with shot, after the loss of half of his men and when but two guns remained undamaged. His gallant Lieutenant, Michael Bille, remained on board to look after the wounded and to throw the ammunition overboard. The *Vagrien* also succumbed in the unequal struggle, and was abandoned after the remaining three guns had been spiked and the ammunition destroyed. The rest of the southern ships were equally *hors de combat*. But as the fire slowed on the south, the thunder of the cannons grew louder

northward, where the batteries of Nyholm and the Threecrowns now began to engage the advancing British ships. These, however, were, after a fierce four hours' contest, in a very indifferent condition to reply to the fire of the Danish batteries now opening on them. During the last hour the British fire had lessened considerably, Nelson's own ship firing only an occasional shot. Several of the great warships were in a desperate plight. The *Argent* counted seventy-five shot in her hull, of which fourteen were below the water-line, bowsprit shot away, the masts tottering, and rigging and sails in tatters. She had 122 men dead and wounded. The *Monarch* and the *Isis* were equally damaged; but what caused the greatest anxiety to Nelson was that three of his heaviest liners—*Ganges*, *Monarch*, and *Defiance*—were drifting helplessly with the current towards the Danish battery, which opened fire upon them with terrible effect. The *Ganges* and *Monarch* fouled each other, and the *Defiance* grounded on the shoal. The situation was desperate, but Nelson was equal to the emergency. Ordering the white flag to be hoisted on the fore, he entered his cabin and indited the following letter:—

'To the Danes, the Brothers of Englishmen.—Lord Nelson has orders to spare Denmark when resistance ceases; but if the fire continues from the Danish side Lord Nelson will be compelled to set on fire all the floating batteries he has taken, it not being in his power to save the brave Danes who have defended them.

'Nelson and Bronte.

'On board H.M.S. *Elephant*, on the Roads of Copenhagen,
'April 2nd, 1801.'

That the great Nelson—an exceptionally humane officer for his times—could have seriously intended to carry such a threat into execution, leaving to their fate a number of helpless prisoners and wounded men, enemies though they were, is not to be believed. He probably doubted the effect of his letter himself, but considered it just worth a trial. It proved, however, to be a masterstroke of diplomacy. This letter was not addressed to the Commander-in-Chief of the Danish line of defence, but to the Prince Regent. It was entrusted to Sir F. Thesiger, who went ashore with it under parliamentary flag. As soon as the letter was despatched, a council of war was convened on board the *Elephant* to consider the advisability of attacking the still intact northern Danish division with the least damaged ships if the flag should be refused.

The prevailing opinion, however, was that the best plan would be to take advantage of the favourable wind and extricate the fleet from its perilous position in these shallow and little-known waters. If, also, Nelson's letter had not had the desired effect, he would have been compelled to run the gauntlet of the formidable Threecrown battery, supported by Steen Bille's squadron, and the Danish hulks which had struck, but were covered by the battery, would not have fallen into his hands. But Nelson's good luck did not desert him.

According to the usages of war the messenger should have been forced by the first Danish ship he met to proceed to the flag-ship; but the boat managed to reach the shore without interference, and Nelson's letter was duly delivered to the Crown Prince, who had watched the battle from the shore, deeply moved by the terrible carnage. He foolishly suffered himself to entertain Nelson's proposals instead of at once sending his messenger to Commodore Fisher, who alone was in position to judge of the real state of affairs. The kind-hearted but weak Prince despatched accordingly his Adjutant-General, Lindholm, to Lord Nelson with power to conclude a temporary armistice. Fisher was ordered to desist from hostilities and the Crown battery to cease its fire.

It was now past four o'clock. Nelson, more astute than his foes, declined to negotiate with Lindholm, but sent him to Hyde Parker, his nominal commander-in-chief, lying miles away to the North. Precious time was gained, which Nelson promptly availed himself of in hauling out those of his ships which had drifted in dangerous proximity to the Crown battery, and to get the rest of his fleet safely past that formidable fortress, a veritable lion in the path. It was now obvious from what a trap he had cleverly managed to escape, for presently the *Monarch* and his own ship, the *Elephant*, struck the ground within range of the battery and remained immovable for several hours in spite of all efforts to float them. A similar fate overtook the *Ganges* and the frigate *Désirée*. Thus it would appear that at that critical time the moiety of Nelson's fleet was either stranded or otherwise crippled when he hoisted the parliamentary flag and induced the Prince to stop the battle.[1]

[1] I append (from a Danish translation) an extract from a letter written by Capt. Thomas Fremantle, commanding the *Ganges*, dated two days after the battle. The letter is addressed to the Marquis of Buckingham. '. . . At that time Lord Nelson realised that several of our ships were so crippled that it would be exceedingly difficult to extricate them from their perilous position. We cut

The thunder of the cannon had ceased. The white flags of peace flew over the scene where late had raged death and destruction. Night was coming on, the sky was overcast with heavy black clouds, the darkness illuminated by the burning *Dannebroge*, which at last blew up with a terrific crash a couple of hundred yards from the Crown battery. The English worked with might and main to float their stranded ships and take possession of the dearly-bought Danish hulks, and the Danes were busy in getting their wounded ashore.

The superiority of the British, both in men and ships, in this obstinate action continued into the fifth hour is incontestable. What Nelson gained were a number of old, half-rotten hulks, so absolutely worthless that they were all burned the night after the battle. The *Holsteen*[1] was the only Danish ship they refitted sufficiently to send to England with their wounded men. The other Danish ship believed not to be hopelessly damaged was the *Sjælland*, which the English, against the usages of war, seized during the truce. The flag had been shot away, but the pennant was still flying. However, the fine ship proved on examination to be so completely hulled that she was burnt with the others.

The Danish loss amounted to 1,299 dead or wounded, that of the English, according to their own account, to 943. In his despatches Nelson states that his own ship, the *Elephant*, had only 19 men dead and wounded. The London *Court Journal*, on the contrary, stated that the loss in the *Elephant* was 89 men. The number of the killed and wounded British officers is given as 68 (20 killed and 48 wounded), which, compared to the total loss, 943, is remarkable and improbable—one officer to every 13 men; on the Danish side fell 10 officers.

The day after the battle Nelson went ashore. An immense

our hawsers and went adrift. Both the *Elephant* and *Defiance* grounded. We (the *Ganges*) and the *Monarch* likewise. Fortunately we fought an *enemy who has frequently been defeated*, and who failed to take advantage of our difficulties. Otherwise all these ships must have been lost. Through great exertions we have succeeded in floating them again, but you can imagine the condition of my ship, thus battered and with so many wounded on board.'

The gallant captain was unacquainted with Scandinavian history. Our naval record is a proud one, and the names of Juel, Hoidtfeld, and Tordenskjold may well compare with those of most of England's great chieftains of the deep.

[1] The *Holsteen* was repaired in England, and under her new name, *Nassau*, had the strange fate to be one of the three English men-of-war (*Stately*, *Nassau* and *Quebec*) which engaged and destroyed the last Danish ship of the line, *Christian Frederick*, in the Cattegat soon after the bombardment and capture of the Danish fleet in 1807. In this action fell Lieut. Villemoes, the young hero of 1801.

mass of people waited for him at the Custom House Stairs, and followed him without any demonstration as he was driven in a court carriage to the Royal Palace. In his conversations with the Prince Regent and the Danish officers he was all courtesy and suavity. He declared that he had been present in 105 engagements, but none so terrible as the last. 'The French and Spanish fight well,' he observed, 'but they could not have stood for an hour such a fire as the Danes had done for more than four.' Upon his request the Prince presented to him young Villemoes. 'The young gentleman deserves to be made an admiral, he said.' To which the Prince replied, 'If I made all my brave officers admirals, there would be no captains and lieutenants left.' However, fine words butter no parsnips. Nelson could well afford to be courteous and generous to his late foes. The negotiations proceeded slowly till the startling news arrived in Copenhagen that the Emperor Paul had been murdered. Knowing that his successor was favourably disposed to England, an armistice of fourteen weeks was agreed upon, Denmark abandoning an *active* participation in the League of Armed Neutrality, and Nelson surrendering the prisoners taken in the Danish hulks. In the course of the year the Czar Alexander concluded a peace with England, without consulting Denmark and Sweden, in which the principle of neutrality was entirely set aside. Denmark, deceived and abandoned by Russia, had to follow suit, and the League of Armed Neutrality became henceforth a dead letter.

The Battle of Copenhagen was no doubt lost by the Danes, but that action cannot in fairness be reckoned among England's 'glorious' victories. Nelson's success was won more by diplomacy than by force of arms. No medals were granted for that victory, and the rejoicings in London soon died away when it came to be known that the victory was mainly owing to a clever ruse on the part of the great hero.

In little Denmark the 'bloody Maunday Thursday' is not forgotten. We count it our Day of Honour (*vor Hædersdag*) when we bore the brunt of battle against a splendid British fleet commanded by the immortal Nelson himself, the greatest hero who ever trod a deck, and that our first battle after an uninterrupted peace of eighty years. The naval record of old England stands unsurpassed among the nations, and she can well afford to be generous, not to say just, to her Danish antagonist in 1801, who undoubtedly proved that the old Viking blood still flowed in his veins and animated his courage.

ABOVE PROOF.

I DON'T like Menken.

Undoubtedly he is a clever—almost a brilliantly clever man, but he is, to my mind, just a trifle *too* unconventional in his ideas.

He is, however, very good company, and I have passed a good many evenings with him, over a pipe, and will acquit him of ever having *bored* me.

I went to his lodgings with him a few nights ago from the club, and soon found myself seated in an arm-chair by the fireside, with a pipe in my mouth and a glass of most excellent whisky-and-water beside me. We talked of many things, till at length, I forget how, the conversation turned on murders and murderers.

Some time previous, London, and indeed the whole country, had been appalled by a series of ghastly murders, all apparently committed by the same hand, though in no case was a clue afforded by which the murderer might be discovered.

Menken explained a theory of his own on the subject as novel as it was startling, when the subject turned to circumstantial evidence and its value.

'After all,' I said, 'in ninety-nine murders out of a hundred, circumstantial evidence and motive are the only helps to conviction. No one in his senses commits a murder if there is any one looking on!'

'No,' said Menken slowly, 'people prefer doing these things in private, if possible. But sometimes they are not aware that there *are* witnesses.'

He paused and filled his pipe.

'It is not everyone,' he went on, 'who has been a secret witness of a murder, but *I* have.'

'You?' I exclaimed.

Menken nodded.

'Was he convicted and hanged?' I asked.

'It wasn't a "he," but a "she,"' said Menken, smiling. 'And "she" was *not* convicted and hanged, or even *tried*.'

'But surely you——' I was beginning, when Menken broke in.

'My dear fellow, nothing I could have said could have convicted the woman. It was a very odd case altogether; one of

the most ingenious things I ever heard of. I will tell you the story, if you like; it will be simpler than your getting it out of me by cross-examination.

'About four years ago I was travelling in Switzerland. In the course of my rambles I reached Tauserwald. I was much taken with the place: the scenery was superb, the hotel old-fashioned but delightfully comfortable.

'There were several people staying there besides myself, but as I am a gregarious sort of fellow I was rather glad of it. After I had been there about a fortnight, on entering the dining-room for dinner I noticed some new arrivals. Among them was a party of three English: an old gentleman, his young wife, and a daughter of the old gentleman's by a former marriage. The daughter, poor girl, was blind. She was about twenty, and looked delicate. I cannot say she was pretty, but yet she was not unpleasing. The old boy, her father, was just like other old English gentlemen you see about.

'The wife was decidedly pretty; she was about eight-and-twenty, fair, with grey eyes, and a most undeniable figure. They seemed to be well off, but they did not hold much intercourse with the rest of the inmates of the hotel.

'You know I rather pride myself on my powers of observation. Though I made no sort of acquaintance with the party, I used to watch them and study them, as I do all my fellow-creatures whom I come across.

'I was not long in finding out three facts. First, that the old gentleman was madly fond of his wife and indifferent to his daughter; secondly, that the daughter adored her father and did not like his wife; thirdly, that the wife hated them both.

'I was all the more pleased with my perception of these facts, inasmuch as no one else in the hotel had the least idea of the situation; outwardly, there was perfect harmony in the trio.

'One morning, after the party had been in the hotel about a week, the old gentleman did not appear as usual at breakfast, and, in reply to inquiries, his wife said that he was not feeling well. In the course of the day, the doctor, an Englishman by the way, was sent for, and, in the evening, the landlord, who was as angry with the old man as if he had got his illness on purpose, told me confidentially, with tears of rage, that the old gentleman had been pronounced by the doctor to be ill of gastric fever, and that the case was serious. The landlord's anxiety was not without reason.

The fact could not be concealed, and visitors began to leave in haste. Only a few besides me remained on. I am not in the least nervous about illness, and I had no intention of leaving the place for such a cause, a resolve which raised me greatly in the landlord's esteem.

'One morning, about ten days after the old gentleman's seizure, I met the doctor coming down stairs. He looked much less anxious than for some days past, indeed there was an expression almost of satisfaction on his face.

'"How is your patient?" I asked.

'"The crisis is past, or almost past," he answered cheerfully. "He owes his life, if he pulls through, to the nursing of his daughter and his wife, especially the daughter, who is a trump! He is now asleep, and upon that sleep everything depends. If he wakens in three or four hours of his own accord, he will be safe in all human probability. Everything depends on his sleep. I have told the landlord to give strict orders to every servant to be most careful; there must be no noise of any sort. If he were wakened suddenly, the shock would kill him as certainly as if you fired a pistol through his brain; I have just told his wife this; all that is wanted is—sleep."

'The doctor nodded to me as he went down the steps from the hotel, smiling as if anticipating a triumph for his art.

'"Monsieur," said a voice at my elbow. I turned, and saw my friend the landlord. "Monsieur knows," said he, smiling sourly, "that Austrian Count who was going to be so brave? Who had no fears for sickness? Well; that so brave man, he also is now frightened—he has gone, Monsieur! He went early this morning, making excuses, but he could not deceive me! He was frightened. He tried to joke; he said he could not sleep; that he had heard all night the ticking in the wall, which, he said, means death."

'"That is an English superstition too," I said.

'"Bah!" said the innkeeper, with concentrated scorn; "these are not times for such foolish superstitions. Monsieur has no such foolish fancies?"

'I laughed. "Ah! Monsieur is brave! Look; the Austrian's room is that very room Monsieur wished to have when he first came; it looks out upon the glacier, and is perhaps my best room. Monsieur thought he would prefer one less expensive on the floor above. Monsieur remembers? Well; courage deserves to be rewarded. Monsieur shall have the room for the same price as the one he has now."

'I thanked my friend the landlord. It was certainly a room I had coveted. The view was superb; it was nearer the dining and smoking-room; in every way a great improvement on the one I was occupying.

'"Can I have it at once?" I asked.

'"Oh, certainly! Of course Monsieur knows," the landlord went on slowly and looking a little doubtfully at me, "that it is the room next to the sick-room, where that *sacré* old man is lying ill!"

'I laughed, and I think the expression of my face reassured the landlord as to my being completely indifferent to such matters, for he went on:—

'"Monsieur is a man! *enfin*—a man! The room is ready and at your disposal."

'He was going away, but came back quickly. "Only Monsieur will pardon me for reminding him that the doctor has ordered that no noise shall be made near the sick-room. He says the old man's life depends on his sleeping quietly. It would be better, perhaps, not to move Monsieur's luggage down till the evening."

'Of course I assented; but feeling desirous of seeing my new and much-coveted possession, and feeling sure of my ability to enter it without making any noise, I went upstairs, quietly stole down the corridor, and entered the room without a possibility of my having been heard. It was a large, bright, cheerful apartment, in the older part of the hotel. It was wainscoted with oak panels. The window was large, and, as I have mentioned before, commanded one of the most exquisite views to be found in Switzerland.

'I looked round the room with a sense of satisfaction. I have told you I am observant of my fellow-creatures; I am not less so of inanimate objects. I have an eye in such matters a detective might envy. I soon saw a mark, or cut, in the wainscoting on one side of the room; it was so small that I believe many men might have passed days in the room without noticing it. I am an inquisitive man, and I at once went to it and examined it. It was a chink in the wood; I stooped and looked through; the whole of the interior of the sick-room was visible. Three silent figures were the occupants. On the bed lay the old man sleeping, his grey hairs on the pillow; at the side knelt, in prayer, his blind daughter; behind the daughter—close behind—was the wife. She alone seemed living. She was drawing stealthily—

oh so stealthily and slowly—a small round table laden with jugs and medicine bottles across the floor.

'At first I did not realise what she was doing; I knew she had every motive to be silent in her movements, but I caught sight of her face! It was the face of a devil! Never were eyes so hideously expressive of murderous hate! In a flash I understood it all.

'*She was moving the table to a position such that the slightest movement of the kneeling figure of the blind daughter, praying for her father's life, would hurl it and its fragile burden to the ground!!*

'I dare say you think I am a callous sort of fellow, but I assure you I was horror-struck. I would have given worlds to warn the poor child, but knew not how. To have called out would have been as fatal as the catastrophe itself.

'I felt stupefied—paralysed. The end came before my swimming brain could find any way to help. The poor girl rose, her hands still clasped. I saw the table reel—and as I, sick with horror, withdrew my eyes, I heard the crash, followed by a piercing shriek——.'

Menken paused. 'Give me the whisky, old chap! Thanks.'

'Did he die?' I asked.

'He was as dead as if you had fired a pistol through his brain,' said Menken quietly.

After a pause he went on. 'I slipped out of the room before the hubbub began. No one ever knew I had been in it. I had, however, to sleep in it that night; and though you know I am not a superstitious fellow at all, I assure you it was a very uncomfortable night. I kept starting out of my sleep, thinking I heard the crash and the scream next door. It took me nearly a week to get over it.'

We smoked in silence for some minutes.

'I wonder what became of that woman!' I said.

'Oh, she married again. The daughter died about a year after this happened, I believe.'

'How did you find out?' I asked, a little surprised.

'Well, it was rather curious. I went to stay down in Devonshire last summer, in a country house; the first person I saw was our ingenious friend the murderess, quite cheerful and jolly; I took her in to dinner.'

Somehow I don't like Menken, but he never bores me.

COUSINS GERMAN.

For upwards of half a century we English have travelled unrestingly in German lands, have bathed in German baths, drunk of German springs, economised in German towns, and educated our children at German Polytechnicums and Conservatoriums; yet, thanks to our insular custom of staying at hotels where the cooking is Anglo-French, the waiters hybrid, and the chambermaids Swiss, the knowledge possessed by the average Englishman of the manners and habits of the average German is as scanty as it is incorrect. It will be found that the Englishman's belief is that his German cousin is a sluggish, phlegmatic, prosaic sort of person, with few ideas beyond his pipe and his beer. As a matter of fact, the German is excitable, impulsive, and quick-tempered, with an abnormally long tongue; while in mind he is a most curious mixture of prose and poetry, of cynical common sense and visionary sentimentality. He has little self-control, and no reserve at all; indeed, the latter quality he neither understands nor appreciates. The secret of these national idiosyncrasies lies in the fact that, owing to political and social causes, Germany has not advanced in civilisation as she has advanced in power and importance. This assertion must not, however, be taken in an altogether uncomplimentary sense. Civilisation is a very good thing in moderation, but it is perhaps better to have too little of it than too much.

In some respects social life in Germany at the present day affords a fairly accurate picture of social life in England nearly a century ago. The dinner-hour is a case in point. No highly-civilised nation dines heavily in the middle of the day, and then curls itself up to sleep for the best part of the afternoon. The Germans, however, cling to their 'Mittagessen,' and it would, perhaps, be awkward to alter the time of the meal, since that would necessitate the invention of a new word for 'dinner.' In more aristocratic German circles the dinner-hour varies from three to five, a custom that reminds one of the abnormally long evenings and endless 'round games' enjoyed by Jane Austen's heroines. Worst of all, however, are the formal entertainments in Germany, such as the 'Tafel,' given, fortunately, only on grand occasions, such as a silver-wedding, christening, or birthday.

Dinner usually begins at three or four o'clock, and continues with slight interruptions of singing, acting, and speech-making, until twelve o'clock the next morning. Our English dinner-parties, even at the worst and dreariest early Victorian era, could never have attained such dimensions, if only from the fact that neither English tongues nor English stomachs can stand the same amount of wear and tear as their German equivalents.

When an Englishman makes his first acquaintance with Germany, he is generally struck by the politeness of the people, except, of course, the post-office and railway officials. He is quite embarrassed by the invariable 'Bitte sehr' with which his modest 'Danke' is received. He observes with envy and admiration the graceful ease with which a German raises his hat and utters his 'Guten Tag,' or 'Adieu,' as he enters or leaves a railway carriage or a shop, his unfailing presence of mind and *savoir faire* in society, his wonderful flow of conversation on any topic that may be introduced. He can kiss an elderly lady's hand without looking a fool, and he will take the trouble to talk to and draw out the shyest schoolgirl of seventeen. It must be allowed that the German girl is better off in society than her English or American cousin. Instead of being compelled to make conversation for, and amuse her cavalier, or else be voted a bore, it is her part to be talked to, entertained, and paid court to. She is even considered inclined to be fast if she takes an equal share in the conversation.

But to return to manners and the reverse side of the medal. When the Englishman finds himself on familiar terms in German society, his ideas respecting Teutonic politeness undergo a change, or rather he discovers that fine manners do not invariably prove the possession of good breeding. For example, at a party where English strangers are present it is the commonest thing for the guests to discuss English politics, habits, and customs, with a candour only equalled by their ignorance of the subject. A German gentleman will cheerfully inform his English neighbour that there is no music in England except 'Katzenmusik'; or that the English Army was defeated in every battle in Egypt; or else that the English are, taken as a whole, a brutal and arrogant race. If any one resents these flowery compliments, the most unfeigned surprise is evinced by the rest of the company. It is so kind, so charitable of them, they consider, to tell the ignorant foreigner of his little faults and failings. The only way for an Englishman to hold his own in such society is to turn the conversation upon the

subject of India and the English colonies, with an occasional allusion to the superiority of our Navy. This has the instant effect of reducing the German, if not to silence, at least to a more subdued and respectful frame of mind.

Another trait which in England would scarcely be looked upon as the height of good breeding, is the habit of asking innumerable personal questions, even of almost complete strangers. But most startling of all is the constant discussion, especially at meals, of the proper treatment of that very important object, from a German point of view, the 'Magen.' The Magen is looked upon as a kind of idol with a capricious and often evil disposition. It must always be considered and propitiated. Sacrifices must frequently be made to it, and in the summer it must be taken to some fashionable watering-place to undergo a 'Kur.' It really might be thought that the Germans hold, with certain of the ancient philosophers, that their souls are situated in their stomachs.

One of the most striking proofs of the backward state of civilisation in Germany is the undoubted inferiority of the women to the men. This is to be noticed in all ranks and conditions of life, and is the more curious since the German girl usually receives an admirable education, not only in 'book-learning,' but also in cookery and needlework. Yet after her marriage she accepts her position as the 'Hausfrau' and 'Hausmutter,' with few ideas or aspirations beyond her kitchen and her nursery, and no topics of conversation except the iniquity of her servants and the extravagance of her neighbours. Her husband, on the other hand, is, as a rule, original and intelligent, and would be an agreeable conversationalist, if he were not too argumentative and self-opinionated. In theatrical matters the same contrast may be noticed. The actors are invariably better than the actresses, the tenors and baritones outshine the sopranos and contraltos; even the male ballet dancers are more agile and graceful than their short-petticoated colleagues.

There are one or two particulars in which it must candidly be allowed our German cousins set us an excellent example. Perhaps the most important of these is their national thoroughness. They possess that capacity for taking infinite pains which has been incorrectly defined as genius. Honest, minute, untiring industry is the secret of their success as scientists, as antiquarians, and as musicians. Thanks to the comparatively uncivilised state

of the country, cheap competition does not flourish in Germany to the same extent as in England, and the German tradesman has not yet become a past-master in the noble art of 'scamping.' On the other hand, in crafts that require clever fingers and a light touch he is still some way behind.

It may freely be acknowledged that our cousins understand the art of living better than we. The struggle to 'keep up appearances' is almost unknown, simply because there is no disgrace in being poor. The most infinitesimal economies are practised, and so far from being ashamed of them, the German 'Hausfrau' proclaims them with triumphant self-complacency. No unnecessary expense is incurred for servants, one cheerful, hard-working slavey sufficing, with the mistress's help, to serve even a well-to-do household. Instead of wasting their money in a futile attempt to appear better off than they are, or to outshine their neighbours, the Germans spend their spare cash upon well-earned recreation. Theatres, concerts, foreign travel, take the place of butler, jobbed brougham, and bad dinner-parties. Germany is essentially the paradise for poor gentility, not because everything is cheap by any means, but because the mode of life is simple and expectations are small.

The motto 'Live and let live' is, we should imagine, that held in most esteem in the Fatherland. One hears of no temperance agitators, district visitors, or vestry meetings; no guilds, bands or societies for the practice of all the Christian virtues, though there are 'Vereins' in plenty for the practice of music and good fellowship. The poor are left to manage their own affairs, except that they are compelled to insure against sickness and old age. They work longer hours and lead harder lives than the English poor, but they have more amusements of a wholesome kind, and manage to enjoy themselves without getting drunk, in spite of the lack of a Blue Ribbon Army.

The Germans, more especially those of the Lutheran persuasion, are not a church-going race. The men are for the most part avowed free-thinkers. The best among them are moral rather than religious, refusing to be fettered by any doctrine or creed, but leading upright lives, for their own satisfaction and for the benefit of the community. The women, if they belong to the 'unco' guid,' attend church once a fortnight or so, otherwise half-a dozen times a year is thought sufficient. A really good and pious German lady once informed the writer that if she went to church every Sunday she would be considered quite eccentric,

while if she refused to go to a party or theatre on the ground that it would be breaking the Sabbath, her friends would certainly be requested to place her under proper restraint. No doubt the national objection to church-going is partly due to the length and dreariness of the services. It must require uncommon patience and a highly devout frame of mind to endure chorales sung with most exasperating deliberation, and sermons an hour or more in length.

It requires some courage in the space of a short article to touch at all upon such an inexhaustible subject as the German language, whose very copiousness forms the worst stumbling-block in the path of the English student; indeed, the despair of the latter generally reaches its climax when he finds himself expected to learn, remember, and use in the right place, at least a dozen equivalents for each of our useful little verbs, 'to put,' and 'to get.' But while far from wishing that our own should ever equal the German language in 'pomp and circumstance,' it is as well to mention that there are two or three words contained in the latter which we might adopt with much advantage, since in each case we have the 'thing' without the power to express it. First, then, let us introduce the word 'Backfisch,' for we have the Backfisch always with us. She ranges from fifteen to eighteen years of age, keeps a diary, climbs trees secretly, blushes on the smallest provocation, and has no conversation. She is the feminine counterpart of the hobbledehoy, and is a mixture of the hoyden, the bread-and-butter miss, and the *ingénue* of the French stage. As we possess no one descriptive term for her, we might, for convenience sake, adopt the German 'Backfisch,' although it is not a pretty word, and the derivation is slightly obscure.

Then there is the verb to 'bummeln,' which is an almost exact equivalent of the French 'flâner.' Now the nearest that the English language approaches to this word is in our 'stroll' or 'lounge,' but to 'bummeln' means a great deal more than either of these. It means to walk slowly down a much-frequented street, such as Unter den Linden, in Berlin, or Prager Strasse, in Dresden, or the left side of Regent Street, at the most fashionable hour of the day, to stop and look in at the photograph shops that you have seen a hundred times before, to stare at all the prettiest women you meet, and criticise them to the friend who accompanies you, to look with the eye of a would-be connoisseur at the horses that pass, to talk and smoke unceasingly, and when you

have reached the bottom of the street to turn round and repeat the whole performance, finally ending in a restaurant or a Biergarten. We do not 'bummeln' so much or so thoroughly as the Germans, but still we do it sufficiently to require a proper word for it.

Lastly, there is the convenient, and, for ladies, really indispensable verb, to 'schwärmen.' The best definition of this word seems to be the falling in love in a purely impersonal manner with the artistic or intellectual gifts of any more or less distinguished man or woman. It is possible, for example, to 'schwärmen' for actors, singers, authors, doctors, military commanders, preachers, and painters. A German girl can schwärmen for any or all of these, whether they be male or female, and openly avow the same, without even her mother taking alarm. She can send bouquets to one, and write for autographs from another, buy photographs of a third, and, in short, play at suffering from a grand passion in the most innocent and enjoyable fashion. A man can schwärmen, too, but the objects of his 'schwärmerei' very seldom happen to be of his own sex. They are usually of the artistic profession, and pretty as well as talented. Now English people are no whit behind their German cousins in the practice of 'schwärming,' but they are sadly hampered by having no term wherewith to express their enthusiasm which shall never be liable to misconstruction or misinterpretation. Therefore it is much to be wished that into the next English dictionary that is published the words 'Backfisch,' 'bummeln,' and 'schwärmen' may be introduced.

In conclusion, it may be observed that the English are looked upon in a more favourable light in Germany at the present time than they were a few years ago, notably during the illness and short reign of the Emperor Frederick. The Germans still regard some of our national habits and customs as eccentric, and even unseemly, but that we have no right to resent, since we amply return the compliment. Still, they make more allowances for us than formerly. If we are somewhat brusque in manner, and wanting in the due observance of forms and ceremonies, yet we are believed to mean well. We are generally considered to be a straightforward, trustworthy sort of people, and particularly satisfactory in our business relations. Altogether, it may be said that for the time being a really 'cousinly' feeling prevails between the English and the Germans, and for the sake of both nations it is to be hoped that this may long continue.

THE WHITE COMPANY.

BY A. CONAN DOYLE,
AUTHOR OF 'MICAH CLARKE.'

CHAPTER XXV.

HOW SIR NIGEL WROTE TO TWYNHAM CASTLE.

On the morning after the jousting, when Alleyne Edricson went, as was his custom, into his master's chamber to wait upon him in his dressing and to curl his hair, he found him already up and very busily at work. He sat at a table by the window, a deer-hound on one side of him and a lurcher on the other, his feet tucked away under the trestle on which he sat, and his tongue in his cheek, with the air of a man who is much perplexed. A sheet of vellum lay upon the board in front of him, and he held a pen in his hand, with which he had been scribbling in a rude school-boy hand. So many were the blots, however, and so numerous the scratches and erasures, that he had at last given it up in despair, and sat with his single uncovered eye cocked upwards at the ceiling, as one who waits upon inspiration.

'By Saint Paul!' he cried, as Alleyne entered, 'you are the man who will stand by me in this matter. I have been in sore need of you, Alleyne.'

'God be with you, my fair lord!' the squire answered. 'I trust that you have taken no hurt from all that you have gone through yesterday.'

'Nay; I feel the fresher for it, Alleyne. It has eased my joints, which were somewhat stiff from these years of peace. I trust, Alleyne, that thou didst very carefully note and mark the bearing and carriage of this knight of France; for it is time, now when you are young, that you should see all that is best, and mould your own actions in accordance. This was a man from whom much honour might be gained, and I have seldom met any one for whom I have conceived so much love and esteem. Could I but learn his name, I should send you to him with my cartel, that we might have further occasion to watch his goodly feats of arms.'

'It is said, my fair lord, that none know his name save only the Lord Chandos, and that he is under vow not to speak it. So ran the gossip at the squires' table.'

'Be he who he might, he was a very hardy gentleman. But I have a task here, Alleyne, which is harder to me than aught that was set before me yesterday.'

'Can I help you, my lord?'

'That indeed you can. I have been writing my greetings to my sweet wife; for I hear that a messenger goes from the prince to Southampton within the week, and he would gladly take a packet for me. I pray you, Alleyne, to cast your eyes upon what I have written, and see if they are such words as my lady will understand. My fingers, as you can see, are more used to iron and leather than to the drawing of strokes and turning of letters. What then? Is there aught amiss, that you should stare so?'

'It is this first word, my lord. In what tongue were you pleased to write?'

'In English; for my lady talks it more than she doth French.'

'Yet this is no English word, my sweet lord. Here are four t's and never a letter betwixt them.'

'By St. Paul! it seemed strange to my eye when I wrote it,' said Sir Nigel. 'They bristle up together like a clump of lances. We must break their ranks and set them farther apart. The word is "that." Now I will read it to you, Alleyne, and you shall write it out fair; for we leave Bordeaux this day, and it would be great joy to me to think that the Lady Loring had word from me.'

Alleyne sat down as ordered, with a pen in his hand and a fresh sheet of parchment before him, while Sir Nigel slowly spelled out his letter, running his forefinger on from word to word.

'That my heart is with thee, my dear sweeting, is what thine own heart will assure thee of. All is well with us here, save that Pepin hath the mange on his back, and Pommers hath scarce yet got clear of his stiffness from being four days on ship-board; and the more so because the sea was very high, and we were like to founder on account of a hole in her side, which was made by a stone cast at us by certain sea-rovers, who may the saints have in their keeping, for they have gone from amongst us, as have young Terlake and two-score mariners and archers, who would be the more welcome here, as there is like to be a very fine war, with much honour and all hopes of advancement; for which I go to

gather my Company together, who are now at Montaubon, where they pillage and destroy; yet I hope that, by God's help, I may be able to show that I am their master, even as, my sweet lady, I am thy servant.' 'How of that, Alleyne?' continued Sir Nigel, blinking at his squire, with an expression of some pride upon his face. 'Have I not told her all that hath befallen us?'

'You have said much, my fair lord; and yet, if I may say so, it is somewhat crowded together, so that my Lady Loring can, mayhap, scarce follow it. Were it in shorter periods——'

'Nay, it boots not how you marshal them, as long as they are all there at the muster. Let my lady have the words, and she will place them in such order as pleases her best. But I would have you add what it would please her to know.'

'That will I,' said Alleyne, blithely, and bent to the task.

'My fair lady and mistress,' he wrote, 'God hath had us in His keeping, and my lord is well and in good cheer. He hath won much honour at the jousting before the prince, when he alone was able to make it good against a very valiant man from France. Touching the moneys, there is enough and to spare until we reach Montaubon. Herewith, my fair lady, I send my humble regards, entreating you that you will give the same to your daughter, the Lady Maude. May the holy saints have you both in their keeping is ever the prayer of thy servant,

'ALLEYNE EDRICSON.'

'That is very fairly set forth,' said Sir Nigel, nodding his bald head as each sentence was read to him. 'And for thyself, Alleyne, if there be any dear friend to whom you would fain give greeting, I can send it for thee within this packet.'

'There is none,' said Alleyne, sadly.

'Have you no kinsfolk, then?'

'None, save my brother.'

'Ha! I had forgot that there was ill-blood betwixt you. But are there none in all England who love thee?'

'None that I dare say so.'

'And none whom you love?'

'Nay, I will not say that,' said Alleyne.

Sir Nigel shook his head and laughed softly to himself. 'I see how it is with you,' he said. 'Have I not noted your frequent sighs and vacant eye? Is she fair?'

'She is indeed,' cried Alleyne from his heart, all tingling at this sudden turn of the talk,

'And good?'

'As an angel.'

'And yet she loves you not?'

'Nay, I cannot say that she loves another.'

'Then you have hopes?'

'I could not live else.'

'Then must you strive to be worthy of her love. Be brave and pure, fearless to the strong and humble to the weak; and so, whether this love prosper or no, you will have fitted yourself to be honoured by a maiden's love, which is, in sooth, the highest guerdon which a true knight can hope for.'

'Indeed, my lord, I do so strive,' said Alleyne; 'but she is so sweet, so dainty, and of so noble a spirit, that I fear me that I shall never be worthy of her.'

'By thinking so you become worthy. Is she, then, of noble birth?'

'She is, my lord,' faltered Alleyne.

'Of a knightly house?'

'Yes.'

'Have a care, Alleyne, have a care!' said Sir Nigel, kindly. 'The higher the steed, the greater the fall. Hawk not at that which may be beyond thy flight.'

'My lord, I know little of the ways and usages of the world,' cried Alleyne, 'but I would fain ask your rede upon the matter. You have known my father and my kin: is not my family one of good standing and repute?'

'Beyond all question.'

'And yet you warn me that I must not place my love too high.'

'Were Minstead yours, Alleyne, then, by St. Paul! I cannot think that any family in the land would not be proud to take you among them, seeing that you come of so old a strain. But while the Socman lives—— Ha, by my soul! if this is not Sir Oliver's step I am the more mistaken.'

As he spoke, a heavy footfall was heard without, and the portly knight flung open the door and strode into the room.

'Why, my little coz,' said he, 'I have come across to tell you that I live above the barber's in the Rue de la Tour, and that there is a venison pasty in the oven and two flasks of the right vintage on the table. By St. James! a blind man might find the place, for one has but to get in the wind from it, and follow the

savoury smell. Put on your cloak, then, and come, for Sir Walter Hewett and Sir Robert Briquet, with one or two others, are awaiting us.'

'Nay, Oliver, I cannot be with you, for I must to Montaubon this day.'

'To Montaubon? But I have heard that your Company is to come with my forty Winchester rascals to Dax.'

'If you will take charge of them, Oliver. For I will go to Montaubon with none save my two squires and two archers. Then, when I have found the rest of my Company, I shall lead them to Dax. We set forth this morning.'

'Then I must back to my pasty,' said Sir Oliver. 'You will find us at Dax, I doubt not, unless the prince throw me into prison, for he is very wrath against me.'

'And why, Oliver?'

'Pardieu! because I have sent my cartel, gauntlet, and defiance to Sir John Chandos and to Sir William Felton.'

'To Chandos? In God's name, Oliver, why have you done this?'

'Because he and the other have used me despitefully.'

'And how?'

'Because they have passed me over in choosing those who should joust for England. Yourself and Audley I could pass, coz, for you are mature men; but who are Wake, and Percy, and Beauchamp? By my soul! I was prodding for my food into a camp-kettle when they were howling for their pap. Is a man of my weight and substance to be thrown aside for the first three half-grown lads who have learned the trick of the tilt-yard? But hark ye, coz, I think of sending my cartel also to the prince.'

'Oliver! Oliver! You are mad!'

'Not I, i' faith! I care not a denier whether he be prince or no. By Saint James! I see that your squire's eyes are starting from his head like a trussed crab. Well, friend, we are all three men of Hampshire, and not lightly to be jeered at.'

'Has he jeered at you then?'

'Pardieu! yes. "Old Sir Oliver's heart is still stout," said one of his court. "Else had it been out of keeping with the rest of him," quoth the prince. "And his arm is strong," said another. "So is the backbone of his horse," quoth the prince. This very day I will send him my cartel and defiance.'

'Nay, nay, my dear Oliver,' said Sir Nigel, laying his hand

upon his angry friend's arm. 'There is naught in this, for it was but saying that you were a strong and robust man, who had need of a good destrier. And as to Chandos and Felton, bethink you that if when you yourself were young the older lances had ever been preferred, how would you then have had the chance to earn the good name and fame which you now bear? You do not ride as light as you did, Oliver, and I ride lighter by the weight of my hair, but it would be an ill thing if in the evening of our lives we showed that our hearts were less true and loyal than of old. If such a knight as Sir Oliver Buttesthorn may turn against his own prince for the sake of a light word, then where are we to look for steadfast faith and constancy?'

'Ah! my dear little coz, it is easy to sit in the sunshine and preach to the man in the shadow. Yet you could ever win me over to your side with that soft voice of yours. Let us think no more of it then. But, holy Mother! I had forgot the pasty, and it will be as scorched as Judas Iscariot! Come, Nigel, lest the foul fiend get the better of me again.'

'For one hour, then; for we march at mid-day. Tell Aylward, Alleyne, that he is to come with me to Montaubon, and to choose one archer for his comrade. The rest will to Dax when the prince starts, which will be before the feast of the Epiphany. Have Pommers ready at mid-day with my sycamore lance, and place my harness on the sumpter mule.'

With these brief directions, the two old soldiers strode off together, while Alleyne hastened to get all in order for their journey.

CHAPTER XXVI.

HOW THE THREE COMRADES GAINED A MIGHTY TREASURE.

It was a bright crisp winter's day when the little party set off from Bordeaux on their journey to Montaubon, where the missing half of their Company had last been heard of. Sir Nigel and Ford had ridden on in advance, the knight upon his hackney, while his great war-horse trotted beside his squire. Two hours later Alleyne Edricson followed; for he had the tavern reckoning to settle, and many other duties which fell to him as squire of the body. With him came Aylward and Hordle John, armed as of

old, but mounted for their journey upon a pair of clumsy Landes horses, heavy-headed and shambling, but of great endurance, and capable of jogging along all day, even when between the knees of the huge archer, who turned the scale at two hundred and seventy pounds. They took with them the sumpter mules, which carried in panniers the wardrobe and table furniture of Sir Nigel; for the knight, though neither fop nor epicure, was very dainty in small matters, and loved, however bare the board or hard the life, that his napery should still be white and his spoon of silver.

There had been frost during the night, and the white, hard road rang loud under their horses' irons as they spurred through the east gate of the town, along the same broad highway which the unknown French champion had traversed on the day of the jousts. The three rode abreast, Alleyne Edricson with his eyes cast down and his mind distrait, for his thoughts were busy with the conversation which he had had with Sir Nigel in the morning. Had he done well to say so much, or had he not done better to have said more? What would the knight have said had he confessed to his love for the Lady Maude? Would he cast him off in disgrace, or might he chide him as having abused the shelter of his roof? It had been ready upon his tongue to tell him all when Sir Oliver had broken in upon them. Perchance Sir Nigel, with his love of all the dying usages of chivalry, might have contrived some strange ordeal or feat of arms by which his love should be put to the test. Alleyne smiled as he wondered what fantastic and wondrous deed would be exacted from him. Whatever it was, he was ready for it, whether it were to hold the lists in the court of the King of Tartary, to carry a cartel to the Sultan of Baghdad, or to serve a term against the wild heathen of Prussia. Sir Nigel had said that his birth was high enough for any lady, if his fortune could but be amended. Often had Alleyne curled his lip at the beggarly craving for land or for gold which blinded man to the higher and more lasting issues of life. Now it seemed as though it were only by this same land and gold that he might hope to reach his heart's desire. But then, again, the Socman of Minstead was no friend to the Constable of Twynham Castle. It might happen that, should he amass riches by some happy fortune of war, this feud might hold the two families aloof. Even if Maude loved him, he knew her too well to think that she would wed him without the blessing of her father. Dark and murky was it all; but hope mounts high in youth, and it ever fluttered over

all the turmoil of his thoughts like a white plume amid the shock of horsemen.

If Alleyne Edricson had enough to ponder over as he rode through the bare plains of Guienne, his two companions were more busy with the present and less thoughtful of the future. Aylward rode for half a mile with his chin upon his shoulder, looking back at a white kerchief which fluttered out of the gable window of a high house which peeped over the corner of the battlements. When at last a dip of the road hid it from his view, he cocked his steel cap, shrugged his broad shoulders, and rode on with laughter in his eyes, and his weather-beaten face all ashine with pleasant memories. John also rode in silence, but his eyes wandered slowly from one side of the road to the other, and he stared and pondered, and nodded his head like a traveller who makes his notes and saves them up for the re-telling.

'By the rood!' he broke out suddenly, slapping his thigh with his great red hand, 'I knew that there was something a-missing, but I could not bring to my mind what it was.'

'What was it then?' asked Alleyne, coming with a start out of his reverie.

'Why, it is the hedgerows,' roared John, with a shout of laughter. 'The country is all scraped as clear as a friar's poll. But, indeed, I cannot think much of the folk in these parts. Why do they not get to work and dig up these long rows of black and crooked stumps which I see on every hand? A franklin of Hampshire would think shame to have such litter upon his soil.'

'Thou foolish old John!' quoth Aylward. 'You should know better, since I have heard that the monks of Beaulieu could squeeze a good cup of wine from their own grapes. Know, then, that if these rows were dug up the wealth of the country would be gone, and mayhap there would be dry throats and gaping mouths in England, for in three months' time these black roots will blossom and shoot and burgeon, and from them will come many a good shipload of Médoc and Gascony which will cross the narrow seas. But see the little church in the hollow, and the folk who cluster in the churchyard! By my hilt! it is a burial, and there is a passing-bell!' He pulled off his steel cap as he spoke and crossed himself, with a muttered prayer for the repose of the dead.

'There too,' remarked Alleyne, as they rode on again, 'that which seems to the eye to be dead is still full of the sap of life, even as the vines were. Thus God hath written Himself and His

laws very broadly on all that is around us, if our poor dull eyes and duller souls could but read what He hath set before us.'

'Ha! mon petit,' cried the bowman, 'you take me back to the days when you were new-fledged, as sweet a little chick as ever pecked his way out of a monkish egg. I had feared that in gaining our debonair young man-at-arms we had lost our soft-spoken clerk. In truth, I have noted much change in you since we came from Twynham Castle.'

'Surely it would be strange else, seeing that I have lived in a world so new to me? Yet I trust that there are many things in which I have not changed. If I have turned to serve an earthly master, and to carry arms for an earthly king, it would be an ill thing if I were to lose all thought of the great high King and Master of all, whose humble and unworthy servant I was ere ever I left Beaulieu. You, John, are also from the cloisters, but I trow that you do not feel that you have deserted the old service in taking on the new.'

'I am a slow-witted man,' said John, 'and, in sooth, when I try to think about such matters it casts a gloom upon me. Yet I do not look upon myself as a worse man in an archer's jerkin than I was in a white cowl, if that be what you mean.'

'You have but changed from one white company to the other,' quoth Aylward. 'But, by these ten finger-bones! it is a passing strange thing to me to think that it was but in the last fall of the leaf that we walked from Lyndhurst together, he so gentle and maidenly, and you, John, like a great red-limbed, overgrown moon-calf; and now here you are as sprack a squire and as lusty an archer as ever passed down the highway from Bordeaux, while I am still the same old Samkin Aylward, with never a change, save that I have a few more sins on my soul and a few less crowns in my pouch. But I have never yet heard, John, what the reason was why you should come out of Beaulieu.'

'There were seven reasons,' said John, thoughtfully. 'The first of them was that they threw me out.'

'Ma foi! camarade, to the devil with the other six! That is enough for me, and for thee also. I can see that they are very wise and discreet folk at Beaulieu. Ah! mon ange, what have you in the pipkin?'

'It is milk, worthy sir,' answered the peasant-maid who stood by the door of a cottage with a jug in her hand. 'Would it please you, gentles, that I should bring you out three horns of it?'

'Nay, ma petite, but here is a two-sous piece for thy kindly tongue and for the sight of thy pretty face. Ma foi! but she has a bonne mine. I have a mind to bide and speak with her.'

'Nay, nay, Aylward,' cried Alleyne. 'Sir Nigel will await us, and he in haste.'

'True, true camarade! Adieu, ma chérie! mon cœur est toujours à toi. Her mother is a well-grown woman also. See where she digs by the wayside. Ma foi! the riper fruit is ever the sweeter. Bon jour, ma belle dame! God have you in his keeping! Said Sir Nigel where he would await us?'

'At Marmande or Aiguillon. He said that we could not pass him, seeing that there is but the one road.'

'Ay, and it is a road that I know as I know the Midhurst parish butts,' quoth the bowman. 'Thirty times have I journeyed it, forward and backward, and, by the twang of string! I am wont to come back this way more laden than I went. I have carried all that I had into France in a wallet, and it hath taken four sumpter mules to carry it back again. God's benison on the man who first turned his hand to the making of war! But there, down in the dingle, is the church of Cardillac, and you may see the inn where three poplars grow beyond the village. Let us on, for a stoup of wine would hearten us upon our way.'

The highway had lain through the swelling vineyard country, which stretched away to the north and east in gentle curves, with many a peeping spire and feudal tower, and cluster of village houses, all clear cut and hard in the bright wintry air. To their right stretched the blue Garonne, running swiftly seawards, with boats and barges dotted over its broad bosom. On the other side lay a strip of vineyard, and beyond it the desolate and sandy region of the Landes, all tangled with faded gorse and heath and broom, stretching away in unbroken gloom to the blue hills which lay low upon the farthest sky-line. Behind them might still be seen the broad estuary of the Gironde, with the high towers of Saint André and Saint Remi shooting up from the plain. In front, amid radiating lines of poplars, lay the riverside townlet of Cardillac—grey walls, white houses, and a feather of blue smoke.

'This is the "Mouton d'Or,"' said Aylward, as they pulled up their horses at a whitewashed, straggling hostel. 'What ho there!' he continued, beating upon the door with the hilt of his sword. 'Tapster, ostler, varlet, hark hither, and a wannion on

your lazy limbs! Ha! Michel, as red in the nose as ever! Three jacks of the wine of the country, Michel—for the air bites shrewdly. I pray you, Alleyne, to take note of this door, for I have a tale concerning it.'

'Tell me, friend,' said Alleyne to the portly red-faced innkeeper, 'has a knight and a squire passed this way within the hour?'

'Nay, sir, it would be two hours back. Was he a small man, weak in the eyes, with a want of hair, and speaks very quiet when he is most to be feared?'

'The same,' the squire answered. 'But I marvel how you should know how he speaks when he is in wrath, for he is very gentle-minded with those who are beneath him.'

'Praise to the saints! it was not I who angered him,' said the fat Michel.

'Who, then?'

'It was young Sieur de Crespigny of Saintonge, who chanced to be here, and made game of the Englishman, seeing that he was but a small man and hath a face which is full of peace. But indeed this good knight was a very quiet and patient man, for he saw that the Sieur de Crespigny was still young and spoke from an empty head, so he sat his horse and quaffed his wine, even as you are doing now, all heedless of his clacking tongue.'

'And what then, Michel?'

'Well, messieurs, it chanced that the Sieur de Crespigny, having said this and that, for the laughter of the varlets, cried out at last about the glove that the knight wore in his coif, asking if it was the custom in England for a man to wear a great archer's glove in his cap. Pardieu! I have never seen a man get off his horse as quick as did that stranger Englishman. Ere the words were past the other's lips he was beside him, his face nigh touching, and his breath hot upon his cheeks. "I think, young sir," quoth he softly, looking into the other's eyes, "that now that I am nearer you will very clearly see that the glove is not an archer's glove." "Perchance not," said the Sieur de Crespigny with a twitching lip. "Nor is it large, but very small," quoth the Englishman. "Less large than I had thought," said the other, looking down, for the knight's gaze was heavy upon his eyelids. "And in every way such a glove as might be worn by the fairest and sweetest lady in England," quoth the Englishman. "It may be so," said the Sieur de Crespigny, turning his face

from him. "I am myself weak in the eyes, and have often taken one thing for another," quoth the knight, as he sprang back into his saddle and rode off, leaving the Sieur de Crespigny biting his nails before my door. Ha! by the five wounds, many men of war have drunk my wine, but never one who was more to my fancy than this little Englishman.'

'By my hilt! he is our master, Michel,' quoth Aylward, 'and such men as we do not serve under a laggart. But here are four deniers, Michel, and God be with you! En avant, camarades! for we have a long road before us.'

At a brisk trot the three friends left Cardillac and its wine-house behind them, riding without a halt past St. Macaire, and on by ferry over the river Dorpt. At the farther side the road winds through La Réolle, Bazaille, and Marmande, with the sunlit river still gleaming upon the right, and the bare poplars bristling up upon either side. John and Alleyne rode silent on either side, but every inn, farm-steading, or castle brought back to Aylward some remembrance of love, foray, or plunder, with which to beguile the way.

'There is the smoke from Bazas, on the farther side of Garonne,' quoth he. 'There were three sisters yonder, the daughters of a farrier, and, by these ten finger-bones! a man might ride for a long June day and never set eyes upon such maidens. There was Marie, tall and grave, and Blanche petite and gay, and the dark Agnes, with eyes that went through you like a waxed arrow. I lingered there as long as four days, and was betrothed to them all; for it seemed shame to set one above her sisters, and might make ill blood in the family. Yet, for all my care, things were not merry in the house, and I thought it well to come away. There, too, is the mill of Le Souris. Old Pierre Le Carron, who owned it, was a right good comrade, and had ever a seat and a crust for a weary archer. He was a man who wrought hard at all that he turned his hand to; but he heated himself in grinding bones to mix with his flour, and so through over diligence he brought a fever upon himself and died.'

'Tell me, Aylward,' said Alleyne, 'what was amiss with the door of yonder inn that you should ask me to observe it.'

'Pardieu! yes, I had well-nigh forgot. What saw you on yonder door?'

'I saw a square hole, through which doubtless the host may peep when he is not too sure of those who knock.'

'And saw you naught else?'

'I marked that beneath this hole there was a deep cut in the door, as though a great nail had been driven in.'

'And naught else?'

'No.'

'Had you looked more closely you might have seen that there was a stain upon the wood. The first time that I ever heard my comrade Black Simon laugh was in front of that door. I heard him once again when he slew a French squire with his teeth, he being unarmed and the Frenchman having a dagger.'

'And why did Simon laugh in front of the inn-door?' asked John.

'Simon is a hard and perilous man when he hath the bitter drop in him; and, by my hilt! he was born for war, for there is little sweetness or rest in him. This inn, the "Mouton d'Or," was kept in the old days by one François Gourval, who had a hard fist and a harder heart. It was said that many and many an archer coming from the wars had been served with wine with simples in it, until he slept, and had then been stripped of all by this Gourval. Then on the morrow, if he made complaint, this wicked Gourval would throw him out upon the road or beat him, for he was a very lusty man, and had many stout varlets in his service. This chanced to come to Simon's ears when we were at Bordeaux together, and he would have it that we should ride to Cardillac with a good hempen cord, and give this Gourval such a scourging as he merited. Forth we rode then, but when we came to the "Mouton d'Or," Gourval had had word of our coming and its purpose, so that the door was barred, nor was there any way into the house. "Let us in, good Master Gourval!" cried Simon, and "Let us in, good Master Gourval!" cried I, but no word could we get through the hole in the door, save that he would draw an arrow upon us unless we went on our way. "Well, Master Gourval," quoth Simon at last, "this is but a sorry welcome, seeing that we have ridden so far just to shake you by the hand." "Canst shake me by the hand without coming in," said Gourval. "And how that?" asked Simon. "By passing in your hand through the hole," said he. "Nay, my hand is wounded," quoth Simon, "and of such a size that I cannot pass it in." "That need not hinder," said Gourval, who was hot to be rid of us; "pass in your left hand." "But I have something for thee, Gourval," said Simon. "What then?" he asked. "There was an English archer who slept here last week of the name of

Hugh of Nutbourne." "We have had many rogues here," said Gourval. "His conscience hath been heavy within him because he owes you a debt of fourteen deniers, having drunk wine for which he hath never paid. For the easing of his soul, he asked me to pay the money to you as I passed." Now this Gourval was very greedy for money, so he thrust forth his hand for the fourteen deniers; but Simon had his dagger ready, and he pinned his hand to the door. "I have paid the Englishman's debt, Gourval!" quoth he, and so rode away, laughing so that he could scarce sit his horse, leaving mine host still nailed to his door. Such is the story of the hole which you have marked, and of the smudge upon the wood. I have heard that from that time English archers have been better treated in the auberge of Cardillac. But what have we here by the wayside?'

'It appears to be a very holy man,' said Alleyne.

'And, by the rood! he hath some strange wares,' cried John. 'What are these bits of stone, and of wood, and rusted nails, which are set out in front of him?'

The man whom they had remarked sat with his back against a cherry-tree, and his legs shooting out in front of him, like one who is greatly at his ease. Across his thighs was a wooden board, and scattered over it all manner of slips of wood and knobs of brick and stone, each laid separate from the other, as a huckster places his wares. He was dressed in a long grey gown, and wore a broad hat of the same colour, much weather-stained, with three scallop-shells dangling from the brim. As they approached, the travellers observed that he was advanced in years, and that his eyes were upturned and yellow.

'Dear knights and gentlemen,' he cried in a high, crackling voice, 'worthy Christian cavaliers, will ye ride past and leave an aged pilgrim to die of hunger? The sight hath been burned from mine eyes by the sands of the Holy Land, and I have had neither crust of bread nor cup of wine these two days past.'

'By my hilt! father,' said Aylward, looking keenly at him, 'it is a marvel to me that thy girdle should have so goodly a span and clip thee so closely if you have in sooth had so little to place within it.'

'Kind stranger,' answered the pilgrim, 'you have unwittingly spoken words which are very grievous to me to listen to. Yet I should be loth to blame you, for I doubt not that what you said was not meant to sadden me, nor to bring my sore affliction back

to my mind. It ill becomes me to prate too much of what I have endured for the Faith; and yet, since you have observed it, I must tell you that this thickness and roundness of the waist is caused by a dropsy brought on by over haste in journeying from the house of Pilate to the Mount of Olives.'

'There, Aylward,' said Alleyne, with a reddened cheek, 'let that curb your blunt tongue. How could you bring a fresh pang to this holy man, who hath endured so much and hath journeyed as far as Christ's own blessed tomb?'

'May the foul fiend strike me dumb!' cried the bowman in hot repentance; but both the palmer and Alleyne threw up their hands to stop him.

'I forgive thee from my heart, dear brother,' piped the blind man. 'But, oh, these wild words of thine are worse to mine ears than aught which you could say of me.'

'Not another word shall I speak,' said Aylward; 'but here is a franc for thee, and I crave thy blessing.'

'And here is another,' said Alleyne.

'And another,' cried Hordle John.

But the blind palmer would have none of their alms. 'Foolish, foolish pride!' he cried, beating upon his chest with his large brown hand. 'Foolish, foolish pride! How long, then, will it be ere I can scourge it forth? Am I, then, never to conquer it? Oh, strong, strong are the ties of flesh, and hard it is to subdue the spirit! I come, friends, of a noble house, and I cannot bring myself to touch this money, even though it be to save me from the grave.'

'Alas! father,' said Alleyne, 'how then can we be of help to thee?'

'I had sat down here to die,' quoth the palmer; 'but for many years I have carried in my wallet these precious things which you see set forth now before me. It were sin, thought I, that my secret should perish with me. I shall therefore sell these things to the first worthy passers-by, and from them I shall have money enough to take me to the shrine of Our Lady at Rocamadour, where I hope to lay these old bones.'

'What are these treasures, then, father?' asked Hordle John. 'I can but see an old rusty nail, with bits of stone and slips of wood.'

'My friend,' answered the palmer, 'not all the money that is in this country could pay a just price for these wares of mine.

This nail,' he continued, pulling off his hat and turning up his sightless orbs, 'is one of those wherewith man's salvation was secured. I had it, together with this piece of the true rood, from the five-and-twentieth descendant of Joseph of Arimathea, who still lives in Jerusalem alive and well, though latterly much afflicted by boils. Ay, you may well cross yourselves, and I beg that you will not breathe upon it or touch it with your fingers.'

'And the wood and stone, holy father?' asked Alleyne, with bated breath, as he stared awe-struck at his precious relics.

'This cantle of wood is from the true cross, this other from Noah his ark, and the third is from the door-post of the temple of the wise King Solomon. This stone was thrown at the sainted Stephen, and the other two are from the Tower of Babel. Here, too, is part of Aaron's rod, and a lock of hair from Elisha the prophet.'

'But, father,' quoth Alleyne, 'the holy Elisha was bald, which brought down upon him the revilements of the wicked children.'

'It is very true that he had not much hair,' said the palmer quickly, 'and it is this which makes this relic so exceeding precious. Take now your choice of these, my worthy gentlemen, and pay such a price as your consciences will suffer you to offer; for I am not a chapman nor a huckster, and I would never part with them, did I not know that I am very near to my reward.'

'Aylward,' said Alleyne excitedly, 'this is such a chance as few folk have twice in one life. The nail I must have, and I will give it to the Abbey of Beaulieu, so that all the folk in England may go thither to wonder and to pray.'

'And I will have the stone from the temple,' cried Hordle John. 'What would not my old mother give to have it hung over her bed?'

'And I will have Aaron's rod,' quoth Aylward. 'I have but five florins in the world, and here are four of them.'

'Here are three more,' said John.

'And here five more,' added Alleyne. 'Holy father, I hand you twelve florins, which is all that we can give, though we well know how poor a pay it is for the wondrous things which you sell us.'

'Down pride, down!' cried the pilgrim, still beating upon his chest. 'Can I not bend myself, then, to take this sorry sum which is offered me for that which has cost me the labours of a life. Give me the dross! Here are the precious relics, and, oh, I pray you that

you will handle them softly and with reverence, else had I rather left my unworthy bones here by the wayside.'

With doffed caps and eager hands, the comrades took their new and precious possessions, and pressed onwards upon their journey, leaving the aged palmer still seated under the cherry-tree. They rode in silence, each with his treasure in his hand, glancing at it from time to time, and scarce able to believe that chance had made them sole owners of relics of such holiness and worth that every abbey and church in Christendom would have bid eagerly for their possession. So they journeyed, full of this good fortune, until opposite the town of Le Mas, where John's horse cast a shoe, and they were glad to find a wayside smith who might set the matter to rights. To him Aylward narrated the good hap which had befallen them; but the smith, when his eyes lit upon the relics, leaned up against his anvil and laughed, with his hand to his side, until the tears hopped down his sooty cheeks.

'Why, masters,' quoth he, 'this man is a coquillart, or seller of false relics, and was here in this smithy not two hours ago. This nail that he hath sold you was taken from my nail-box; and as to the wood and the stones, you will see a heap of both outside, from which he hath filled his scrip.'

'Nay, nay,' cried Alleyne, 'this was a holy man who had journeyed to Jerusalem, and acquired a dropsy by running from the house of Pilate to the Mount of Olives.'

'I know not about that,' said the smith; 'but I know that a man with a grey palmer's hat and gown was here no very long time ago, and that he sat on yonder stump and ate a cold pullet and drank a flask of wine. Then he begged from me one of my nails, and filling his scrip with stones, he went upon his way. Look at these nails, and see if they are not the same as that which he has sold you.'

'Now may God save us!' cried Alleyne, all aghast. 'Is there no end, then, to the wickedness of humankind? He so humble, so aged, so loth to take our money—and yet a villain and a cheat. Whom can we trust or believe in?'

'I will after him,' said Aylward, flinging himself into the saddle. 'Come, Alleyne, we may catch him ere John's horse be shod.'

Away they galloped together, and ere long they saw the old grey palmer walking slowly along in front of them. He turned, however, at the sound of their hoofs, and it was clear that his blind-

ness was a cheat like all the rest of him, for he ran swiftly through a field and so into a wood, where none could follow him. They hurled their relics after him, and so rode back to the blacksmith's the poorer both in pocket and in faith.

CHAPTER XXVII.

HOW ROGER CLUB-FOOT WAS PASSED INTO PARADISE.

It was evening before the three comrades came into Aiguillon. There they found Sir Nigel Loring and Ford safely lodged at the sign of the 'Bâton Rouge,' where they supped on good fare, and slept between lavender-scented sheets. It chanced, however, that a knight of Poitou, Sir Gaston d'Estelle, was staying there on his way back from Lithuania, where he had served a term with the Teutonic knights under the land-master of the presbytery of Marienberg. He and Sir Nigel sat late in high converse as to bushments, outfalls, and the intaking of cities, with many tales of warlike men and valiant deeds. Then their talk turned to minstrelsy, and the stranger knight drew forth a cittern, upon which he played the minne-lieder of the north, singing the while in a high, cracked voice of Hildebrand and Brunhild and Siegfried, and all the strength and beauty of the land of Almain. To this Sir Nigel answered with the romances of Sir Eglamour, and of Sir Isumbras, and so through the long winter night they sat by the crackling wood-fire answering each other's songs until the crowing cocks joined in their concert. Yet, with scarce an hour of rest, Sir Nigel was as blithe and bright as ever as they set forth after breakfast upon their way.

'This Sir Gaston is a very worthy man,' said he to his squires as they rode from the 'Bâton Rouge.' 'He hath a very strong desire to advance himself, and would have entered upon some small knightly debate with me, had he not chanced to have his arm-bone broken by the kick of a horse. I have conceived a great love for him, and I have promised him that when his bone is mended I will exchange thrusts with him. But we must keep to this road upon the left.'

'Nay, my fair lord,' quoth Aylward. 'The road to Montaubon is over the river, and so through Quercy and the Agenois.'

'True, my good Aylward; but I have learned from this worthy

knight, who hath come over the French marches, that there is a company of Englishmen who are burning and plundering in the country round Villefranche. I have little doubt, from what he says, that they are those whom we seek.'

'By my hilt! it is like enough,' said Aylward. 'By all accounts, they had been so long at Montaubon that there would be little there worth the taking. Then, as they have already been in the south, they would come north to the country of the Aveyron.'

'We shall follow the Lot until we come to Cahors, and then cross the marches into Villefranche,' said Sir Nigel. 'By St. Paul! as we are but a small band, it is very likely that we may have some very honourable and pleasing adventure, for I hear that there is little peace upon the French border.'

All morning they rode down a broad and winding road, barred with the shadows of poplars. Sir Nigel rode in front with his squires, while the two archers followed behind with the sumpter mule between them. They had left Aiguillon and the Garonne far to the south, and rode now by the tranquil Lot, which curves blue and placid through a gently-rolling country. Alleyne could not but mark that, whereas in Guienne there had been many townlets and few castles, there were now many castles and few houses. On either hand grey walls and square grim keeps peeped out at every few miles from amid the forests, while the few villages which they passed were all ringed round with rude walls, which spoke of the constant fear and sudden foray of a wild frontier land. Twice during the morning there came bands of horsemen swooping down upon them from the black gateways of wayside strongholds, with short stern questions as to whence they came and what their errand. Bands of armed men clanked along the highway, and the few lines of laden mules which carried the merchandise of the trader were guarded by armed varlets, or by archers hired for the service.

'The peace of Bretigny hath not made much change in these parts,' quoth Sir Nigel, 'for the country is overrun with free companions and masterless men. Yonder towers, between the wood and the hill, mark the town of Cahors, and beyond it is the land of France. But here is a man by the wayside, and as he hath two horses and a squire I make little doubt that he is a knight. I pray you, Alleyne, to give him greeting from me, and to ask him for his titles and coat-armour. It may be that I can relieve

him of some vow, or perchance he hath a lady whom he would wish to advance.'

'Nay, my fair lord,' said Alleyne, 'these are not horses and a squire, but mules and a varlet. The man is a mercer, for he hath a great bundle beside him.'

'Now, God's blessing on your honest English voice!' cried the stranger, pricking up his ears at the sound of Alleyne's words. 'Never have I heard music that was so sweet to mine ear. Come, Watkin, lad, throw the bales over Laura's back! My heart was nigh broke, for it seemed that I had left all that was English behind me, and that I would never set eyes upon Norwich market-square again.' He was a tall, lusty, middle-aged man with a ruddy face, a brown forked beard shot with grey, and a broad Flanders hat set at the back of his head. His servant, as tall as himself, but gaunt and raw-boned, had swung the bales on the back of one mule, while the merchant mounted upon the other and rode to join the party. It was easy to see, as he approached, from the quality of his dress and the richness of his trappings, that he was a man of some wealth and position.

'Sir knight,' said he, 'my name is David Micheldene, and I am a burgher and alderman of the good town of Norwich, where I live five doors from the church of Our Lady, as all men know on the banks of Yare. I have here my bales of cloth which I carry to Cahors—woe worth the day that ever I started on such an errand! I crave your gracious protection upon the way for me, my servant, and my mercery; for I have already had many perilous passages, and have now learned that Roger Club-foot, the robber-knight of Quercy, is out upon the road in front of me. I hereby agree to give you one rose-noble if you bring me safe to the inn of the "Angel" in Cahors, the same to be repaid to me or my heirs if any harm come to me or my goods.'

'By Saint Paul!' answered Sir Nigel, 'I should be a sorry knight if I asked pay for standing by a countryman in a strange land. You may ride with me and welcome, Master Micheldene, and your varlet may follow with my archers.'

'God's benison upon thy bounty!' cried the stranger. 'Should you come to Norwich you may have cause to remember that you have been of service to Alderman Micheldene. It is not very far to Cahors, for surely I see the cathedral towers against the sky-line; but I have heard much of this Roger Club-foot, and the more I hear, the less do I wish to look upon his face. Oh, but I

am sick and weary of it all, and I would give half that I am worth to see my good dame sitting in peace beside me, and to hear the bells of Norwich town.'

'Your words are strange to me,' quoth Sir Nigel, 'for you have the appearance of a stout man, and I see that you wear a sword by your side.'

'Yet it is not my trade,' answered the merchant. 'I doubt not that if I set you down in my shop at Norwich you might scarce tell fustian from falding, and know little difference between the velvet of Genoa and the three-piled cloth of Bruges. There you might well turn to me for help. But here on a lone roadside, with thick woods and robber-knights, I turn to you, for it is the business to which you have been reared.'

'There is sooth in what you say, Master Micheldene,' said Sir Nigel, 'and I trust that we may come upon this Roger Club-foot, for I have heard that he is a very stout and skilful soldier, and a man from whom much honour is to be gained.'

'He is a bloody robber,' said the trader, curtly, 'and I wish I saw him kicking at the end of a halter.'

'It is such men as he,' Sir Nigel remarked, 'who give the true knight honourable deeds to do, whereby he may advance himself.'

'It is such men as he,' retorted Micheldene, 'who are like rats in a wheat-rick or moth in a woolfels, a harm and a hindrance to all peaceful and honest men.'

'Yet, if the dangers of the road weigh so heavily upon you, master alderman, it is a great marvel to me that you should venture so far from home.'

'And, sometimes, sir knight, it is a marvel to myself. But I am a man who may grutch and grumble, but when I have set my face to do a thing I will not turn my back upon it until it be done. There is one François Villet, at Cahors, who will send me wine-casks for my cloth-bales, so to Cahors I will go, though all the robber-knights of Christendom were to line the roads like yonder poplars.'

'Stoutly spoken, master alderman! But how have you fared hitherto?'

'As a lamb fares in a land of wolves. Five times we have had to beg and pray ere we could pass. Twice I have paid toll to the wardens of the road. Three times we have had to draw, and once, at La Reolle, we stood over our wool-bales, Watkin and I, and we laid about us for as long as a man might chant a litany, slaying

one rogue and wounding two others. By God's coif! we are men of peace, but we are free English burghers, not to be mishandled either in our country or abroad. Neither lord, baron, knight, or commoner shall have as much as a strike of flax of mine whilst I have strength to wag this sword.'

'And a passing strange sword it is,' quoth Sir Nigel. 'What make you, Alleyne, of these black lines which are drawn across the sheath?'

'I cannot tell what they are, my fair lord.'

'Nor can I,' said Ford.

The merchant chuckled to himself. 'It was a thought of mine own,' said he; 'for the sword was made by Thomas Wilson, the armourer, who is betrothed to my second daughter, Margery. Know, then, that the sheath is one cloth-yard in length, marked off according to feet and inches to serve me as a measuring wand. It is also of the exact weight of two pounds, so that I may use it in the balance.'

'By Saint Paul!' quoth Sir Nigel, 'it is very clear to me that the sword is like thyself, good alderman, apt either for war or for peace. But I doubt not that even in England you have had much to suffer from the hands of robbers and outlaws.'

'It was only last Lammastide, sir knight, that I was left for dead near Reading as I journeyed to Winchester fair. Yet I had the rogues up at the court of pie-powder, and they will harm no more peaceful traders.'

'You travel much then?'

'To Winchester, Linn mart, Bristol fair, Stourbridge, and Bartholomew's in London Town. The rest of the year you may ever find me five doors from the church of Our Lady, where I would from my heart that I was at this moment, for there is no air like Norwich air, and no water like the Yare, nor can all the wines of France compare with the beer of old Sam Yelverton who keeps the "Dun Cow." But, out and alack, here is an evil fruit which hangs upon this chestnut-tree!'

As he spoke they had ridden round a curve of the road and come upon a great tree which shot one strong brown branch across their path. From the centre of this branch there hung a man, with his head at a horrid slant to his body and his toes just touching the ground. He was naked save for a linen under-shirt and pair of woollen drawers. Beside him on a green bank there sat a small man with a solemn face, and a great bundle of papers of all

colours thrusting forth from the scrip which lay beside him. He was very richly dressed, with furred robes, a scarlet hood, and wide, hanging sleeves lined with flame-coloured silk. A great gold chain hung round his neck, and rings glittered from every finger of his hands. On his lap he had a little pile of gold and of silver, which he was dropping, coin by coin, into a plump pouch which hung from his girdle.

'May the saints be with you, good travellers!' he shouted, as the party rode up. 'May the four Evangelists watch over you! May the twelve Apostles bear you up! May the blessed army of martyrs direct your feet and lead you to eternal bliss!'

'Gramercy for these good wishes!' said Sir Nigel. 'But I perceive, master alderman, that this man who hangs here is, by mark of foot, the very robber-knight of whom we have spoken. But there is a cartel pinned upon his breast, and I pray you, Alleyne, to read it to me.'

The dead robber swung slowly to and fro in the wintry wind, a fixed smile upon his swarthy face, and his bulging eyes still glaring down the highway of which he had so long been the terror; on a sheet of parchment upon his breast was printed in rude characters:

ROGER PIED-BOT.

Par l'ordre du Sénéchal de
Castelnau, et de l'Echevin de
Cahors, servantes fidèles du
très vaillant et très puissant
Édouard, Prince de Galles et
d'Aquitaine.

Ne touchez pas,
Ne coûtez pas,
Ne dépêchez pas.

'He took a sorry time in dying,' said the man who sat beside him. 'He could stretch one toe to the ground and bear himself up, so that I thought he would never have done. Now at last, however, he is safely in paradise, and so I may jog on upon my earthly way.' He mounted, as he spoke, a white mule which had been grazing by the wayside, all gay with fustian of gold and silver bells, and rode onward with Sir Nigel's party.

'How know you, then, that he is in paradise?' asked Sir Nigel. 'All things are possible to God, but, certes, without a miracle, I should scarce expect to find the soul of Roger Club-foot amongst the just.'

'I know that he is there because I have just passed him in there,' answered the stranger, rubbing his bejewelled hands together in placid satisfaction. 'It is my holy mission to be a sompnour or pardoner. I am the unworthy servant and delegate of him who holds the keys. A contrite heart and ten nobles to holy mother church may stave off perdition; but he hath a pardon of the first degree, with a twenty-five livre benison, so that I doubt if he will so much as feel a twinge of purgatory. I came up even as the seneschal's archers were tying him up, and I gave him my fore-word that I would bide with him until he had passed. There were two leaden crowns among the silver, but I would not for that stand in the way of his salvation.

'By Saint Paul!' said Sir Nigel, 'if you have indeed this power to open and to shut the gates of hope, then indeed you stand high above mankind. But if you do but claim to have it, and yet have it not, then it seems to me, master clerk, that you may yourself find the gate barred when you shall ask admittance.'

'Small of faith! Small of faith!' cried the sompnour. 'Ah, Sir Didymus yet walks upon earth! And yet no words of doubt can bring anger to mine heart, or a bitter word to my lip, for am I not a poor unworthy worker in the cause of gentleness and peace? Of all these pardons which I bear, every one is stamped and signed by our holy father, the prop and centre of Christendom.'

'Which of them?' asked Sir Nigel.

'Ha, ha!' cried the pardoner, shaking a jewelled forefinger. 'Thou wouldest be deep in the secrets of mother church? Know, then, that I have both in my scrip. Those who hold with Urban shall have Urban's pardon, while I have Clement's for the Clementist—or he who is in doubt may have both, so that come what may he shall be secure. I pray you that you will buy one, for war is bloody work, and the end is sudden, with little time for thought or shrift. Or you, sir, for you seem to me to be a man who would do ill to trust to your own merits.' This to the alderman of Norwich, who had listened to him with a frowning brow and a sneering lip.

'When I sell my cloth,' quoth he, 'he who buys may weigh and feel and handle. These goods which you sell are not to be seen, nor is there any proof that you hold them. Certes, if mortal man might control God's mercy, it would be one of a lofty and God-like life, and not one who is decked out with rings and chains and silks, like a pleasure-wench at a kermesse.'

'Thou wicked and shameless man!' cried the clerk. 'Dost thou dare to raise thy voice against the unworthy servant of mother church?'

'Unworthy enough!' quoth David Micheldene. 'I would have you to know, clerk, that I am a free English burgher, and that I dare say my mind to our father the Pope himself, let alone such a lacquey's lacquey as you!'

'Base-born and foul-mouthed knave!' cried the sompnour. 'You prate of holy things, to which your hog's mind can never rise. Keep silence, lest I call a curse upon you!'

'Silence yourself!' roared the other. 'Foul bird! we found thee by the gallows like a carrion-crow. A fine life thou hast of it with thy silks and thy baubles, cozening the last few shillings from the pouches of dying men. A fig for thy curse! Bide here, if you will take my rede, for we will make England too hot for such as you, when Master Wicliff has the ordering of it. Thou vile thief! it is you, and such as you, who bring an evil name upon the many churchmen who lead a pure and a holy life. Thou outside the door of heaven! Art more like to be inside the door of hell.'

At this crowning insult the sompnour, with a face ashen with rage, raised up a quivering hand and began pouring Latin imprecations upon the angry alderman. The latter, however, was not a man to be quelled by words, for he caught up his ell-measure sword-sheath and belaboured the cursing clerk with it. The latter, unable to escape from the shower of blows, set spurs to his mule and rode for his life, with his enemy thundering behind him. At sight of his master's sudden departure, the varlet Watkin set off after him, with the pack-mule beside him, so that the four clattered away down the road together, until they swept round a curve, and their babble was but a drone in the distance. Sir Nigel and Alleyne gazed in astonishment at one another, while Ford burst out a-laughing.

'Pardieu!' said the knight, 'this David Micheldene must be one of those Lollards about whom Father Christopher of the priory had so much to say. Yet he seemed to be no bad man from what I have seen of him.'

'I have heard that Wicliff hath many followers in Norwich,' answered Alleyne.

'By St. Paul! I have no great love for them,' quoth Sir Nigel. 'I am a man who am slow to change; and, if you take away from me the faith that I have been taught, it would be long ere I

could learn one to set in its place. It is but a chip here and a chip there, yet it may bring the tree down in time. Yet, on the other hand, I cannot but think it shame that a man should turn God's mercy on and off, as a cellarman doth wine with a spigot.'

'Nor is it,' said Alleyne, 'part of the teachings of that mother church of which he had so much to say. There was sooth in what the alderman said of it.'

'Then, by St. Paul! they may settle it betwixt them,' quoth Sir Nigel. 'For me, I serve God, the king, and my lady; and so long as I can keep the path of honour I am well content. My creed shall ever be that of Chandos:

Fais ce que dois—advienge que peut,
C'est commandé au chevalier.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

HOW THE COMRADES CAME OVER THE MARCHES OF FRANCE.

After passing Cahors, the party branched away from the main road, and leaving the river to the north of them, followed a smaller track which wound over a vast and desolate plain. This path led them amid marshes and woods, until it brought them out into a glade with a broad stream swirling swiftly down the centre of it. Through this the horses splashed their way, and on the farther shore Sir Nigel announced to them that they were now within the borders of the land of France. For some miles they still followed the same lonely track, which led them through a dense wood, and then widening out, curved down to an open, rolling country, such as they had traversed between Aiguillon and Cahors.

If it were grim and desolate upon the English border, however, what can describe the hideous barrenness of this ten times harried tract of France? The whole face of the country was scarred and disfigured, mottled over with the black blotches of burned farmsteadings and the grey gaunt gable-ends of what had been châteaux. Broken fences, crumbling walls, vineyards littered with stones, the shattered arches of bridges—look where you might, the signs of ruin and rapine met the eye. Here and there only, on the farthest sky-line, the gnarled turrets of a castle or the graceful pinnacles of church or of monastery showed where the forces of the sword or of the spirit had preserved some

small islet of security in this universal flood of misery. Moodily and in silence the little party rode along the narrow and irregular track, their hearts weighed down by this far-stretching land of despair. It was indeed a stricken and a blighted country, and a man might have ridden from Auvergne in the north to the marches of Foix, nor ever seen a smiling village or a thriving homestead.

From time to time as they advanced they saw strange lean figures scraping and scratching amid the weeds and thistles, who, on sight of the band of horsemen, threw up their arms and dived in among the brushwood, as shy and as swift as wild animals. More than once, however, they came on families crouching by the wayside, who were too weak from hunger and disease to fly, so that they could but sit like hares on a tussock, with panting chests and terror in their eyes. So gaunt were these poor folk, so worn and spent—with bent and knotted frames, and sullen, hopeless, mutinous faces—that it made the young Englishmen heart-sick to look upon them. Indeed, it seemed as though all hope and light had gone so far from them that it was not to be brought back; for when Sir Nigel threw down a handful of silver among them there came no softening of their lined faces, but they clutched greedily at the coins, peering questioningly at him, and champing with their animal jaws. Here and there amid the brushwood the travellers saw the rude bundle of sticks which served them as a home—more like a fowl's nest than the dwelling-place of man. Yet why should they build and strive, when the first adventurer who passed would set torch to their thatch, and when their own feudal lord would wring from them with blows and curses the last fruits of their toil? They sat at the lowest depth of human misery, and hugged a bitter comfort to their souls as they realised that they could go no lower. Yet they had still the human gift of speech, and would take council among themselves in their brushwood hovels, glaring with bleared eyes and pointing with thin fingers at the great widespread châteaux which ate like a cancer into the life of the country-side. When such men, who are beyond hope and fear, begin in their dim minds to see the source of their woes, it may be an evil time for those who have wronged them. The weak man becomes strong when he has nothing, for then only can he feel the wild, mad thrill of despair. High and strong the château, lowly and weak the brushwood hut; but God help the seigneur and his lady when the men of the brushwood set their hands to the work of revenge!

Through such country did the party ride for eight or it might be nine miles, until the sun began to slope down in the west and their shadows to stream down the road in front of them. Wary and careful they must be, with watchful eyes to the right and the left, for this was no-man's land, and their only passports were those which hung from their belts. Frenchmen and Englishmen, Gascon and Provençal, Brabanter, Tardvenu, Scorcher, Flayer, and Free Companion, wandered and straggled over the whole of this accursed district. So bare and cheerless was the outlook, and so few and poor the dwellings, that Sir Nigel began to have fears as to whether he might find food and quarters for his little troop. It was a relief to him, therefore, when their narrow track opened out upon a larger road, and they saw some little way down it a square white house with a great bunch of holly hung out at the end of a stick from one of the upper windows.

'By St. Paul!' said he, 'I am right glad; for I had feared that we might have neither provant nor herbergage. Ride on, Alleyne, and tell this innkeeper that an English knight with his party will lodge with him this night.'

Alleyne set spurs to his horse and reached the inn-door a long bow-shot before his companions. Neither varlet nor ostler could be seen, so he pushed open the door and called loudly for the landlord. Three times he shouted, but, receiving no reply, he opened an inner door and advanced into the chief guest-room of the hostel.

A very cheerful wood fire was sputtering and crackling in an open grate at the farther end of the apartment. At one side of this fire, in a high-backed oak chair, sat a lady, her face turned towards the door. The firelight played over her features, and Alleyne thought that he had never seen such queenly power, such dignity and strength, upon a woman's face. She might have been five-and-thirty years of age, with aquiline nose, firm and yet sensitive mouth, dark curving brows, and deep-set eyes which shone and sparkled with a shifting brilliancy. Beautiful as she was, it was not her beauty which impressed itself upon the beholder; it was her strength, her power, the sense of wisdom which hung over the broad white brow, the decision which lay in the square jaw and delicately moulded chin. A chaplet of pearls sparkled amid her black hair, with a gauze of silver network flowing back from it over her shoulders; a black mantle was swathed round her, and she leaned back in her chair as one who is fresh from a journey.

In the opposite corner there sat a very burly and broad-shouldered man, clad in a black jerkin trimmed with sable, with a black velvet cap with curling white feather cocked upon the side of his head. A flask of red wine stood at his elbow, and he seemed to be very much at his ease, for his feet were stuck up on a stool, and between his thighs he held a dish full of nuts. These he cracked between his strong white teeth and chewed in a leisurely way, casting the shells into the blaze. As Alleyne gazed in at him he turned his face half round and cocked an eye at him over his shoulder. It seemed to the young Englishman that he had never seen so hideous a face, for the eyes were of the lightest green, the nose was broken and driven inwards, while the whole countenance was seared and puckered with wounds. The voice, too, when he spoke, was as deep and as fierce as the growl of a beast of prey.

'Young man,' said he, 'I know not who you may be, and I am not much inclined to bestir myself, but if it were not that I am bent upon taking my ease, I swear, by the sword of Joshua! that I would lay my dog-whip across your shoulders for daring to fill the air with these discordant bellowings.'

Taken aback at this ungentle speech, and scarce knowing how to answer it fitly in the presence of the lady, Alleyne stood with his hand upon the handle of the door, while Sir Nigel and his companions dismounted. At the sound of these fresh voices, and of the tongue in which they spoke, the stranger crashed his dish of nuts down upon the floor, and began himself to call for the landlord until the whole house re-echoed with his roarings. With an ashen face the white-aproned host came running at his call, his hands shaking and his very hair bristling with apprehension. 'For the sake of God, sirs,' he whispered as he passed, 'speak him fair and do not rouse him! For the love of the Virgin, be mild with him!'

'Who is this, then?' asked Sir Nigel.

Alleyne was about to explain, when a fresh roar from the stranger interrupted him.

'Thou villain innkeeper,' he shouted, 'did I not ask you when I brought my lady here whether your inn was clean?'

'You did, sire.'

'Did I not very particularly ask you whether there were any vermin in it?'

'You did, sire.'

'And you answered me?'

'That there were not, sire.'

'And yet ere I have been here an hour I find Englishmen crawling about within it. Where are we to be free from this pestilent race? Can a Frenchman upon French land not sit down in a French auberge without having his ears pained by the clack of their hideous talk? Send them packing, innkeeper, or it may be the worse for them and for you.'

'I will, sire, I will!' cried the frightened host, and bustled from the room, while the soft, soothing voice of the woman was heard remonstrating with her furious companion.

'Indeed, gentlemen, you had best go,' said mine host. 'It is but six miles to Villefranche, where there are very good quarters at the sign of the "Lion Rouge."'

'Nay,' answered Sir Nigel, 'I cannot go until I have seen more of this person, for he appears to be a man from whom much is to be hoped. What is his name and title?'

'It is not for my lips to name it unless by his desire. But I beg and pray you, gentlemen, that you will go from my house, for I know not what may come of it if his rage should gain the mastery of him.'

'By Saint Paul!' lisped Sir Nigel, 'this is certainly a man whom it is worth journeying far to know. Go tell him that a humble knight of England would make his further honourable acquaintance, not from any presumption, pride, or ill-will, but for the advancement of chivalry and the glory of our ladies. Give him greeting from Sir Nigel Loring, and say that the glove which I bear in my cap belongs to the most peerless and lovely of her sex, whom I am now ready to uphold against any lady whose claim he might be desirous of advancing.'

The landlord was hesitating whether to carry this message or no, when the door of the inner room was flung open, and the stranger bounded out like a panther from its den, his hair bristling and his deformed face convulsed with anger.

'Still here!' he snarled. 'Dogs of England, must ye be lashed hence? Tiphaine, my sword!' He turned to seize his weapon, but as he did so his gaze fell upon the blazonry of Sir Nigel's shield, and he stood staring while the fire in his strange green eyes softened into a sly and humorous twinkle.

'Mort Dieu!' cried he, 'it is my little swordsman of Bordeaux. I should remember that coat-armour, seeing that it is but

three days since I looked upon it in the lists by Garonne. Ah! Sir Nigel, Sir Nigel! you owe me a return for this,' and he touched his right arm, which was girt round just under the shoulder with a silken kerchief.

But the surprise of the stranger at the sight of Sir Nigel was as nothing compared with the astonishment and the delight which shone upon the face of the knight of Hampshire as he looked upon the strange face of the Frenchman. Twice he opened his mouth and twice he peered again, as though to assure himself that his eyes had not played him a trick.

'Bertrand!' he gasped at last. 'Bertrand du Guesclin!'

'By Saint Ives!' shouted the French soldier, with a hoarse roar of laughter, 'it is well that I should ride with my vizor down, for he that has once seen my face does not need to be told my name. It is indeed I, Sir Nigel, and here is my hand! I give you my word that there are but three Englishmen in this world whom I would touch save with the sharp edge of the sword: the prince is one, Chandos the second, and you the third; for I have heard much that is good of you.'

'I am growing aged, and am somewhat spent in the wars,' quoth Sir Nigel, 'but I can lay by my sword now with an easy mind, for I can say that I have crossed swords with him who hath the bravest heart and the strongest arm of all this great kingdom of France. I have longed for it, I have dreamed of it, and now I can scarce bring my mind to understand that this great honour hath indeed been mine.'

'By the Virgin of Rennes! you have given me cause to be very certain of it,' said Du Guesclin, with a gleam of his broad white teeth.

'And perhaps, most honoured sir, it would please you to continue the debate. Perhaps you would condescend to go further into the matter. God He knows that I am unworthy of such honour, yet I can show my four-and-sixty quarterings, and I have been present at some bickerings and scufflings during these twenty years.'

'Your fame is very well known to me, and I shall ask my lady to enter your name upon my tablets,' said Sir Bertrand. 'There are many who wish to advance themselves, and who bide their turn, for I refuse no man who comes on such an errand. At present it may not be, for mine arm is stiff from this small touch, and I would fain do you full honour when we cross swords again. Come in with me, and let your squires come also, that my sweet

spouse, the Lady Tiphaine, may say that she hath seen so famed and gentle a knight.'

Into the chamber they went in all peace and concord, where the Lady Tiphaine sat like queen on throne for each in turn to be presented to her. Sooth to say, the stout heart of Sir Nigel, which cared little for the wrath of her lion-like spouse, was somewhat shaken by the calm, cold face of this stately dame, for twenty years of camp-life had left him more at ease in the lists than in a lady's boudoir. He bethought him, too, as he looked at her set lips and deep-set, questioning eyes, that he had heard strange tales of this same Lady Tiphaine du Guesclin. Was it not she who was said to lay hands upon the sick and raise them from their couches when the leeches had spent their last nostrums. Had she not forecast the future, and were there not times when in the loneliness of her chamber she was heard to hold converse with some being upon whom mortal eye never rested—some dark familiar who passed where doors were barred and windows high? Sir Nigel sunk his eye and marked a cross on the side of his leg as he greeted this dangerous dame, and yet ere five minutes had passed he was hers, and not he only, but his two young squires as well. The mind had gone out of them, and they could but look at this woman and listen to the words which fell from her lips—words which thrilled through their nerves and stirred their souls like the battle-call of a bugle.

Often in peaceful after-days was Alleyne to think of that scene of the wayside inn of Auvergne. The shadows of evening had fallen, and the corners of the long, low, wood-panelled room were draped in darkness. The sputtering wood fire threw out a circle of red flickering light which played over the little group of wayfarers, and showed up every line and shadow upon their faces. Sir Nigel sat with elbows upon knees, and chin upon hands, his patch still covering one eye, but his other shining like a star, while the ruddy light gleamed upon his smooth white head. Ford was seated at his left, his lips parted, his eyes staring, and a fleck of deep colour on either cheek, his limbs all rigid as one who fears to move. On the other side the famous French captain leaned back in his chair, a litter of nutshells upon his lap, his huge head half buried in a cushion, while his eyes wandered with an amused gleam from his dame to the staring, enraptured Englishmen. Then, last of all, that pale clear-cut face, that sweet clear voice, with its high thrilling talk of the deathlessness of

glory, of the worthlessness of life, of the pain of ignoble joys, and of the joy which lies in all pains which lead to a noble end. Still, as the shadows deepened, she spoke of valour and virtue, of loyalty, honour and fame, and still they sat drinking in her words while the fire burned down and the red ash turned to grey.

'By the sainted Ives!' cried Du Guesclin at last, 'it is time that we spoke of what we are to do this night, for I cannot think that in this wayside auberge there are fit quarters for an honourable company.'

Sir Nigel gave a long sigh as he came back from the dreams of chivalry and hardihood into which this strange woman's words had wafted him. 'I care not where I sleep,' said he; 'but these are indeed somewhat rude lodgings for this fair lady.'

'What contents my lord contents me,' quoth she. 'I perceive, Sir Nigel, that you are under vow,' she added, glancing at his covered eye.

'It is my purpose to attempt some small deed,' he answered.

'And the glove—is it your lady's?'

'It is indeed my sweet wife's.'

'Who is doubtless proud of you.'

'Say, rather, I of her,' quoth he quickly. 'God He knows that I am not worthy to be her humble servant. It is easy, lady, for a man to ride forth in the light of day, and do his devoir when all men have eyes for him. But in a woman's heart there is a strength and truth which asks no praise, and can but be known to him whose treasure it is.'

The Lady Tiphaine smiled across at her husband. 'You have often told me, Bertrand, that there were very gentle knights amongst the English,' quoth she.

'Ay, ay,' said he moodily. 'But to horse, Sir Nigel, you and yours, and we shall seek the château of Sir Tristram de Rochefort, which is two miles on this side of Villefranche. He is Seneschal of Auvergne, and mine old war companion.'

'Certes, he would have a welcome for you,' quoth Sir Nigel; 'but indeed he might look askance at one who comes without permit over the marches.'

'By the Virgin! when he learns that you have come to draw away these rascals he will be very blithe to look upon your face. Innkeeper, here are ten gold pieces. What is over and above your reckoning you may take off from your charges to the next needy knight who comes this way. Come then, for it grows late and the horses are stamping in the roadway.'

The Lady Tiphaine and her spouse sprang upon their steeds without setting feet to stirrup, and away they jingled down the white moonlit highway, with Sir Nigel at the lady's bridle-arm, and Ford a spear's length behind them. Alleyne had lingered for an instant in the passage, and as he did so there came a wild outcry from a chamber upon the left, and out there ran Aylward and John, laughing together like two schoolboys who are bent upon a prank. At sight of Alleyne they slunk past him with somewhat of a shamefaced air, and springing upon their horses galloped after their party. The hubbub within the chamber did not cease, however, but rather increased, with yells of: 'À moi, mes amis! À moi, camarades! À moi, l'honorable champion de l'Évêque de Montaubon! À la recousse de l'église sainte!' So shrill was the outcry that both the innkeeper and Alleyne, with every varlet within hearing, rushed wildly to the scene of the uproar.

It was indeed a singular scene which met their eyes. The room was a long and lofty one, stone-floored and bare, with a fire at the farther end, upon which a great pot was boiling. A deal table ran down the centre, with a wooden wine-pitcher upon it and two horn cups. Some way from it was a smaller table with a single beaker and a broken wine-bottle. From the heavy wooden rafters which formed the roof there hung rows of hooks which held up sides of bacon, joints of smoked beef, and strings of onions for winter use. In the very centre of all these, upon the largest hook of all, there hung a fat little red-faced man with enormous whiskers, kicking madly in the air and clawing at rafters, hams, and all else that was within hand-grasp. The huge steel hook had been passed through the collar of his leather jerkin, and there he hung like a fish on a line, writhing, twisting, and screaming, but utterly unable to free himself from his extraordinary position. It was not until Alleyne and the landlord had mounted on the table that they were able to lift him down, when he sank gasping with rage into a seat, and rolled his eyes round in every direction.

'Has he gone?' quoth he.

'Gone? Who?'

'He, the man with the red head, the giant man.'

'Yes,' said Alleyne, 'he hath gone.'

'And comes not back?'

'No.'

'The better for him!' cried the little man, with a long sigh of relief. 'Mon Dieu! What! am I not the champion of the Bishop of Montaubon? Ah, could I have descended, could I have

come down, ere he fled! Then you would have seen. You would have beheld a spectacle then. There would have been one rascal the less upon earth. Ma foi, yes!'

'Good master Pelligny,' said the landlord, 'these gentlemen have not gone very fast, and I have a horse in the stable at your disposal, for I would rather have such bloody doings as you threaten outside the four walls of mine auberge.'

'I hurt my leg and cannot ride,' quoth the bishop's champion. 'I strained a sinew on the day that I slew the three men at Castelnau.'

'God save you, master Pelligny!' cried the landlord. 'It must be an awesome thing to have so much blood upon one's soul. And yet I do not wish to see so valiant a man mishandled, and so I will, for friendship's sake, ride after this Englishman and bring him back to you.'

'You shall not stir,' cried the champion, seizing the innkeeper in a convulsive grasp. 'I have a love for you, Gaston, and I would not bring your house into ill-repute, nor do such scath to these walls and chattels as must befall if two such men as this Englishman and I fall to work here.'

'Nay, think not of me!' cried the innkeeper. 'What are my walls when set against the honour of François Poursuivant d'Amour Pelligny, champion of the Bishop of Montaubon. My horse, André!'

'By the saints, no! Gaston, I will not have it! You have said truly that it is an awesome thing to have such rough work upon one's soul. I am but a rude soldier, yet I have a mind. Mon Dieu! I reflect, I weigh, I balance. Shall I not meet this man again? Shall I not bear him in mind? Shall I not know him by his great paws and his red head? Ma foi, yes!'

'And may I ask, sir,' said Alleyne, 'why it is that you call yourself champion of the Bishop of Montaubon?'

'You may ask aught which it is becoming to me to answer. The bishop hath need of a champion, because, if any cause be set to test of combat, it would scarce become his office to go down into the lists with leathern shield and cudgel to exchange blows with any varlet. He looks around him then for some tried fighting man, some honest smiter who can give a blow or take one. It is not for me to say how far he hath succeeded, but it is sooth that he who thinks that he hath but to do with the Bishop of Montaubon finds himself face to face with François Poursuivant d'Amour Pelligny.'

At this moment there was a clatter of hoofs upon the road, and a varlet by the door cried out that one of the Englishmen was coming back. The champion looked wildly about for some corner of safety, and was clambering up towards the window, when Ford's voice sounded from without, calling upon Alleyne to hasten, or he might scarce find his way. Bidding adieu to landlord and to champion, therefore, he set off at a gallop, and soon overtook the two archers.

'A pretty thing this, John,' said he. 'Thou wilt have holy church upon you if you hang her champions upon iron hooks in an inn kitchen.'

'It was done without thinking,' he answered apologetically, while Aylward burst into a shout of laughter.

'By my hilt! mon petit,' said he, 'you would have laughed also could you have seen it. For this man was so swollen with pride that he would neither drink with us, nor sit at the same table with us, nor as much as answer a question, but must needs talk to the varlet all the time that it was well there was peace, and that he had slain more Englishmen than there were tags to his doublet. Our good old John could scarce lay his tongue to French enough to answer him, so he must needs reach out his great hand to him and place him very gently where you saw him. But we must on, for I can scarce hear their hoofs upon the road.'

'I think that I can see them yet,' said Ford, peering down the moonlit road.

'Pardieu! yes. Now they ride forth from the shadow. And yonder dark clump is the Castle of Villefranche. En avant, camarades! or Sir Nigel may reach the gates before us. But hark! mes amis, what sound is that?'

As he spoke the hoarse blast of a horn was heard from some woods upon the right. An answering call rung forth upon their left, and hard upon it two others from behind them.

'They are the horns of swineherds,' quoth Aylward. 'Though why they blow them so late I cannot tell.'

'Let us on, then,' said Ford; and the whole party, setting their spurs to their horses, soon found themselves at the Castle of Villefranche, where the drawbridge had already been lowered and the portcullis raised in response to the summons of Du Guesclin.

(To be continued.)

THE

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THE NEW RECTOR.

BY THE AUTHOR OF 'THE HOUSE OF THE WOLF.'

CHAPTER XIV.

THE LETTERS IN THE CUPBOARD.

When Clode left the Town House after his interview with Laura, he was in a state of exaltation—lifted completely out of his ordinary cool and calculating self by what had happened. It was raining, but he had gone some distance before he remarked it; and even then he did not at once put up his umbrella, but strode along through the darkness, his thoughts in a whirl of triumph and excitement. The crisis had come suddenly, but he had not been found unequal to it. He had gone in through the gates despondent, and come out in joy. He had pitted himself against his rival, and had had the best of it. He had wooed, and, almost in spite of his mistress, had won!

He did not for the first few moments consider the consequences. His altercation with the rector might have, he knew, unpleasant results, but he did not yet trouble himself about them, or about the manner in which he was to do Laura's bidding. Such considerations would come later—with the reaction. For the present they did not occur to him. It was enough that Laura might be his—that she never could be the rector's.

He felt the need, in his present excited mood, of some one to speak to, and instead of turning into his own lodgings he passed on to the reading-room, a large barely furnished room, looking upon the top of the town, and used as a club by the lead-

ing townsfolk and a few of the local magnates who lived near. He entered it, and, to his surprise, found the archdeacon seated under the naked gas-burners, interested in the 'Times.' The sight filled him with astonishment, for it was seldom the county members used the room after sunset.

'You are the last person I expected to see,' he said—his tongue naturally hung loose at the moment, and a *bonhomie*, difficult to assume at another time, came easily to him now—'what in the world brings you here at this hour?'

The archdeacon laid down his paper. 'Upon my word I think I was half asleep,' he said. 'I am here for the "Free Foresters'" supper. I thought the hour was half-past six, and came into town accordingly, whereas I find it is half-past seven. I have been here the best part of three-quarters of an hour killing time.'

'But I thought that the rector always said grace for the "Free Foresters,"' the curate answered in some surprise.

'It has been the custom for them to ask him,' the archdeacon replied cautiously. 'By the way, you did it last year, did you not?'

'Yes, for Mr. Williams. He was confined to his room.'

'I thought so. Well, this year these foolish people seem to have taken a fancy not to have the rector, and they came to me. I tried to persuade them to have him, but it was no good. And so,' the archdeacon added, lowering his tone, 'I thought it would look less like a slight if I came than if any other clergyman—you, for instance—were the clerical guest.'

'To be sure,' the curate said warmly. 'It was most thoughtful of you.'

The archdeacon hitched his chair slightly nearer the fire. He felt the influence of the curate's sympathy. The latter had said little, but his manner warmed the old gentleman's heart, and his tongue also grew more loose. 'I wonder whether you know,' he said genially, rubbing his hands up and down his knees, which he was gently toasting, and looking benevolently at his companion, 'how near you were to having the living, Clode?'

'Do you mean Claversham?' the curate replied, experiencing a kind of shock at this reference to the subject so near his heart.

'Yes, of course.'

'I never thought I had a chance of it!'

'You had so good a chance,' the archdeacon answered, nod-

ding his head wisely, 'that only one thing stood between you and it.'

'May I ask what that was?' the curate rejoined, his heart beating faster.

'A promise. The earl promised his old friend that he should have this living. Lord Dynmore told me so himself, the last time I saw him. That would be nearly a year ago, when poor Williams was already ailing.'

'Well, I supposed that to be the case,' Clode answered, his tone one of disappointment. He had expected to hear more than this. 'But I do not quite see how I was affected by it—more, I mean, than others, archdeacon,' he continued.

'That is what I was going to tell you, only it must not go farther,' the archdeacon answered genially. 'Lord Dynmore told me of this promise in connection with a resolution he had just come to—namely, that he would in future give his livings (he has seven in all, you know) to the curate, wherever the latter had been two years at least in the parish, and stood well with it. I am not sure that I agree with him; but he is a conscientious man, though an odd one, and he had formed the opinion that that was the right course. So, now, if anything should happen to Lindo, you would drop into it. And I am not sure,' the archdeacon added confidentially, 'though no one likes Lindo more than I do, that yours would not have been the better appointment.'

The curate disclaimed this so warmly and loyally, that the archdeacon was more than ever pleased with him; and, half-past seven striking, they parted at the door of the reading-room on the best of terms with one another. The archdeacon crossed to his supper and speech, and the curate turned into his rooms, and, throwing himself into the big leather chair before the fire, fixed his eyes on the glowing coals, and began to think—to apply what he had just heard to what he had known before.

A living? He was bound to get a living. And without capital to invest in one, or the favour of a patron, how was it to be done? The bishop? He had no claim there. He had not been long enough in the diocese, nor did he know anything of the bishop's wife. There was only one living he could get, only one living upon which he had a claim, and that was Claversham. It all came back to that—with this added, that he had now a stronger motive than ever for ejecting Lindo from it, and the absolute knowledge to boot that, Lindo ejected, he would be his successor.

Stephen Clode's face grew dark and gloomy as he reached this stage in his reflections. He believed, or thought he believed, that the rector was enjoying what he had no right to enjoy, but still he would fain have had no distinct part in depriving him of it. He would have much preferred to stand by and, save by a word here and there—by little acts scarcely palpable, and quite incapable of proof—do nothing himself to injure him. He knew what loyalty was, and would fain have been loyal in big things at least. But he did not see how it could be done. He fancied that the stir against the rector was dying out. Bonamy had not moved, Gregg was a coward, and of this matter of the 'Free Foresters' he thought nothing. Probably they would return to their allegiance another year, and among the poor the rector's liberality would soon make friends for him. Altogether, the curate, as he rose and walked the room restlessly and with a knitted brow, was forced to the conviction that, if he would be helped, he must help himself, and that now was the time. The iron must be struck before it cooled. Something must be done.

But what? Clode's mind reverted first to the discharged servant, and he considered more than one way in which he might be used. There was an amount of danger, however, in tampering with him which the thinker's astuteness did not fail to note, and which led him presently to determine to leave Felton alone. Perhaps he had made as much capital out of him as could be made with safety.

From him the curate's thoughts passed naturally to the packet of letters in the cupboard at the rectory, the letters which he had once held in his hand, and which he persuaded himself would prove the rector's knowledge of the fraud he was committing. Those letters! They haunted the curate. Walking up and down the room, pishing and pshawing from time to time, he could not disentangle his thoughts from them. The narrow chance which had prevented him reading them before somehow made him feel the more certain of their value now—the more anxious to hold them again in his hands.

Were they still in the cupboard, he wondered. He had retained, not with any purpose, but in pure inadvertence, the key which he had mentioned to the rector; and he had it now. He took it from the mantelshelf, toyed with it, dropped it into his pocket. Then he took up his hat, and was going abruptly from the room when the little servant who waited on him met him. She was

bringing up his simple dinner. The curate's first impulse was to order it to be taken down and kept warm for him. His second, to resume his seat and eat it hastily. When he had finished—he could not have said an hour later what he had had—he took his hat again and went out.

Two minutes saw him arrive at the rectory door, where he was just in time to meet the rector going out. Lindo's face grew red as he saw who his visitor was, and there was more than a suspicion of haughtiness in his tone as he greeted him. 'Good evening,' he said. 'Do you want to see me, Mr. Clode?'

'If you please,' the curate answered simply. 'May I come in?'

For answer, Lindo silently held the door open, and Clode passed through the hall into the library. He was in the habit of entering this room a dozen times a week, but he never did so after leaving his own small lodgings without being struck by its handsome proportions, by the grave harmonious colour of its calf-lined walls, and the air of studious quiet which always reigned within them. Of all the rector's possessions he envied him this room the most. The very sight of the shaded lamp standing on the revolving bookcase at the corner of the hearth, and of the little table beside it, which still bore the rector's coffee-cup and a tiny silver ewer and basin, aroused his spleen afresh. But he gave no outward sign of this. He stood with his hat in one hand, his other leaning on the table, and his head slightly bent. 'Rector,' he said, 'I am afraid I behaved very badly this afternoon.'

'I certainly thought your manner rather odd,' replied the rector shortly; and he stood erect and expectant. But he was half disarmed already.

'I was annoyed, much annoyed, about a private matter,' the curate proceeded in a low, rather despondent tone. 'It is a matter about which I expect I shall presently have to take your opinion. But for the present I am not at liberty to name it. However, I was in trouble, and I foolishly wreaked my annoyance upon the first person I came across.'

'That was, unfortunately, myself,' Lindo said, smiling.

'It would have been very unfortunate indeed for me, if you were as some rectors I could name,' the curate replied gravely, still with his eyes cast down. 'As it is—well, I think you will accept my apology.'

'Say no more about it,' the rector answered hastily. There was nothing he hated so much as a scene. 'Have a cup of coffee, my

dear fellow. I will ring for a cup and saucer.' And, before the curate could protest, his host was at the bell and had rung it, his manner the manner of a boy. 'Sit down, sit down!' he continued. 'Sarah, a cup and saucer, please.'

'But you were going out,' protested the curate, as he complied.

'Only to the post with some letters,' the rector explained. 'I will send Sarah instead.'

Clode sprang up again, a peculiar flush on his cheek, and a flicker as of excitement in his eye. 'No, no,' he said, 'I am putting you to trouble. If you were going to the post, pray go. You can leave me here and come back to me, if that be all.'

The rector hesitated, his letters in his hand. He might send Sarah. But it wanted a few minutes only of nine o'clock, and he did not approve of the maids going out so late. 'Well, I think I will do as you say,' he answered, feeling that compliance was perhaps the truest politeness; 'if you are sure that you do not mind.'

'I beg you will,' the curate said warmly.

The cup and saucer being at that moment brought in, the rector nodded assent. 'Very well; I shall not be two minutes,' he said. 'Take care of yourself while I am away.'

The curate, left alone, muttered to himself, 'No, no, my friend. You will be at least four minutes!' and he waited, with his cup poised, until he heard the outer door closed. Then he set it down. Assuring himself by a steady look that the windows were shuttered, he rose and, quietly crossing the room, as a man might who wished to examine a book, he stood before the little cupboard among the shelves. Perhaps, because he had done the thing before, he did not hesitate. His hand was as steady as it had ever been. If it shook at all, it was with eagerness. His task was so easy and so devoid of danger, under the circumstances, that he even smiled darkly, as he set the key in the lock, at the thought of the more clumsy burglar whom he had detected there. He turned the key and opened the door. Nothing could be more simple. The packet he wanted lay just where he expected to find it. He took it out and dropped it into his breast-pocket, and, long before the time which he had given himself was up, was back in his chair by the fire, with his coffee-cup on his knee.

He might have been expected to feel some surprise at his own coolness. But, as a fact, his thoughts were otherwise employed. He was longing, with intense eagerness, for the moment

when he might take the next step—when he might open the packet and secure the weapon he needed. He fingered the letters as they lay in their hiding-place, and could scarcely refrain from taking them out and examining them there and then. When Lindo returned, and broke into the room with a hearty word about the haste he had made, the curate's answer betrayed no self-consciousness. On the contrary, he rather underplayed his part, his eye and voice displaying for a moment an absence of mind which surprised his host. The next instant he was aware of this, and he conducted himself so warily during the half-hour he remained that he entirely erased from the rector's mind the unlucky impression of the afternoon.

By half-past nine he was back in his own room, at his table, his hat thrown this way, his umbrella that. It took him but a feverish moment to turn up the lamp and settle himself in his chair. Then he took out the packet of letters, and, untying the string which bound them together, he opened the first—there were only six of them in all. This was the one which he had partially read on the former occasion—Messrs. Gearns & Baker's first letter. He read it through now at his leisure, without interruption, once, twice, thrice, and with a long breath laid it down again, and sat gazing, with knitted brows, into the shadow beyond the lamp's influence. There was not a word in it, not an expression, which helped him; nothing to show the recipient of the letter that he was not the Reginald Lindo for whom the living was intended.

The curate sat awhile before he opened the second, and that one he read more quickly. He dealt in the same way with the next, and the next. When, in a short minute or two, he had read them all and they lay in a disordered pile before him—some folded and some unfolded, just as they had dropped from his hands—he leaned back in his chair, and, folding his arms, sat frowning darkly into vacancy. There was not a word to help him in any one of them, not a sentence which even tended to convict the rector. He had been at all his pains for nothing. He had——

The sound of a raised voice asking for him below roused him with a start—roused him from the dream of disappointment. The hasty tread of a foot mounting the stairs two at a time followed; and so quickly that he had scarce time to move. In a second, nevertheless, he was erect, motionless, listening, his hand upon and half covering the letters. A hasty knock on the outside

of his door, and the touch of fingers on the handle, seemed at the last moment to nerve him to action. Then it was all but too late. As the rector—for the rector it was—came hurriedly into the room, the curate, his face pallid, and the drops of perspiration standing on his brow, swept the letters aside and drew a newspaper partly over them. 'What—what is it?' he muttered, stooping forward, his hands on the table, his eyes set in terror.

Lindo was too full of the news he had brought to observe the other's agitation, the more as the lamp was between them, and his eyes were dazzled by the light. 'What is the news? Why, what do you think Bonamy has done?' he answered excitedly, as he closed the door behind him. He was breathing quickly with the haste he had made, and, uninvited, he dropped into a chair.

'What?' said the curate hoarsely. He dared not look down at the table lest he should direct the other's eyes to what lay on it, but he was racked as he stood there by the fear lest some damning corner of the paper, some scrap of the writing, should still be visible. He felt, now it was too late, what he had done. The shame of possible discovery poured like a flood over his soul. 'What is it?' he repeated mechanically. He had not yet recovered enough presence of mind to wonder why the rector should have paid this untimely call.

'He has served me with a writ!' Lindo replied, his face hot with indignation, his lips curling. 'At this hour of the night, too! A writ for trespass in driving out the sheep from the churchyard.'

'A writ!' the curate echoed. 'It is very late for serving writs.'

'Yes. His clerk, who handed it to me—he came five minutes after you left—apologised, and took the blame for that on himself, saying he had forgotten to deliver it on leaving the office.'

'For trespass!' repeated the curate stupidly. What a fool he had been to meddle with those letters under his hand! Why had he not had a little patience? Here, after all, was the catastrophe for which he had been longing.

'Yes, in the Queen's Bench Division of the High Court of Justice, and all the rest of it!' the rector replied; and then he waited to hear what the curate had to say.

But Clode had nothing to say, except 'What shall you do?' And that he said mechanically, and without interest.

'Fight!' replied Lindo briskly, getting up and approaching the table. 'That of course. It was about that I came to you. I do not think there is any lawyer here I should like to

employ. Did not you tell me the other day you knew the archdeacon's lawyers? Some people in Birmingham, I fancy?'

'Yes, I know them,' the curate answered with an effort. He had overcome his first fear, and, as he spoke, he looked down at the table, on which he was still leaning. His hasty movement had disordered his own papers, but none of the tell-tale letters were visible so far as he could see. What, however, if the rector took up the newspaper? Or casually put it aside? The curate grew hot again and felt his knees shake, despite his great self-control. He felt himself on the edge of a precipice down which he dared not cast his eye.

'Then can you give me their address?' the rector continued.

'Certainly!' Clode answered. Indeed, he leapt at the suggestion, for it seemed to offer some chance of escape—a way by which he might rid himself speedily of his visitor.

'Just write it down, that is a good fellow, then,' said the rector, unconscious of what was passing in his mind.

The curate said he would, and tore off at random—the rector was pressing his hand on the newspaper, and might at any moment be taken with a fancy to raise it—the back sheet of the first stray note that came to his fingers, and wrote the address upon it. 'There, that is it,' he said; and as he gave it to Lindo—he had written it standing up and stooping—he almost pushed him away from the table. 'That will serve you, I think. They may be trusted, I am told. The best thing you can do, I am sure,' he continued, advancing so as to get between the other and the table, 'will be to place the matter in their hands at once.'

'I will write before I sleep!' the younger clergyman answered heartily. 'You cannot think how the narrowness and malice of these people provoke me! But I will not keep you now. I see you are busy. Come round early in the morning, will you, and talk it over?'

'I will come the moment I have had breakfast,' the curate answered, making no attempt to detain his visitor.

And then at last the rector went. Clode stood eyeing the newspaper askance until the other's footsteps died away on the pavement outside. Then he swept it off and stood contemplating the half-dozen letters with abhorrence. He loathed and detested them. They had suddenly become to him the incubus which his victim's body becomes to the murderer. The desire which had tempted him to the crime was gone, and he felt them only as a burden.

They were the visible proof of his shame, his disloyalty, his dishonour. To keep them was to become a thief, and yet he shrank with a nervous terror quite new and strange to him from the task of returning them—of going to the study at the rectory and putting them back in the cupboard. It had been easy to get possession of them; he had thought nothing of the risk of that. But to return them now seemed a task so thankless, and withal so perilous, that he quailed before it. With shaking hands he bundled them together and locked them in the lowest drawer of his writing-table. He would return them to-morrow.

CHAPTER XV.

THE BAZAAR.

BEFORE noon on the next day the service of the writ at the rectory had become known in the town; and the course which the churchwardens had taken was freely canvassed in more houses than one. They had on their side all the advantages of prescription, however, while of the rector people said that there was no smoke without fire, and that he would not have become the subject of so many comments and strictures, and the centre of more than one dispute, without being in fault. There had been none of these squabbles in old Mr. Williams's time, they said. Tongues had not wagged about him. But then, they added, he had not aspired to drive tandem with the Homfrays! The town had been good enough for him. He had not wanted to have everything his own way, nor thought himself a small Jupiter in the place. His head had not been turned by a little authority conferred too early, and conferred, if all the town heard was true, in some very odd and unsatisfactory manner.

To know that all round you people are saying that your conceit has led you into trouble is not pleasant. And in one way and another this impression was brought home to the young rector more than once during these days; so that his cheek flamed as he passed the window of the reading-room, or caught the half-restrained sniggle in which Gregg ventured to indulge when in company. Nor were these annoyances all Lindo had to bear. The archdeacon scolded him roundly for placing the matter in the hands of the lawyers without consulting him. Mrs. Hammond

looked grave. Laura seemed less friendly than a little time back. Clode's conduct was odd, too, and unsatisfactory. He was sometimes enthusiastic and loyal, ready to back up his superior as warmly as could be wished; and anon he would show himself the reverse of all this—sullen, repellent, and absolutely unsympathetic.

Altogether the rector was not having a very sunny time, although the heat of conflict kept him warm, and he threw back his blonde head and set his face very hard as he strode about the town, his long-tailed black coat flapping behind him. Little guessing what was being said, he hugged himself more than ever on the one thing which his opponents could not take from him. When all was said and done, he fancied, in his innocence, he must still be rector of Claversham. If his promotion had not brought him as much happiness as he had expected, if he had not been able to do in his new position all he had hoped, the promotion and the position were yet undeniable. Knowing so well all the circumstances of his appointment, he did not give two thoughts to the curious story Kate Bonamy had told him. It did not create a single misgiving in his mind. He was sorry that he had treated her so cavalierly, and more than once he thought with regret almost tender of the girl and the interview. But, for the rest, he treated it as the ignorant invention of the enemy. Possibly on the strength of certain 'Varsity prejudices he was a little too prone to exaggerate the ignorance of Claversham.

On the day before the bazaar a visitor arrived in Claversham. The stranger was a small, dark, sharp-featured man, with a peculiarly alert manner, whom the reader will remember to have met in the Temple. Jack Smith, for he it was—we parted from him last at Euston Station—may have come over on his own motion, or acting upon a hint from Mr. Bonamy, who, since the refusal of Gregg's offer, had thought more and more of the future which lay before his girls. The dark, quiet house had seemed more and more dull, not to him in his own person, but to him considering it in the night-watches through their eyes. Hitherto the lawyer had not encouraged the young Londoner's visits, perhaps because he dreaded the changes of various kinds which he might be forced to make. But now, whether he had given him a hint to come or not, he received him with undoubted cordiality.

Almost the first question Jack asked, Daintry hanging over the back of his chair and Kate smiling in more subdued radiance opposite him, was about his friend, the rector. Fortunately, Mr.

Bonamy was not in the room. 'And how about Lindo?' he asked. 'Have you seen much of him, Kate?'

'No, we have not seen much of him,' she answered, getting up to put something straight which was not greatly awry before.

'Father has, though,' Daintry explained, nodding her head seriously.

'Oh, he has, has he?'

'Yes. He has served him with a writ.'

Jack whistled as much in annoyance as surprise. 'A writ!' he exclaimed. 'What about?'

'About the sheep in the churchyard. Mr. Lindo turned them out,' Kate explained hurriedly, as if she wished to hear no more upon the subject.

But Jack was curious; and gradually he drew from them the story of the rector's iniquities, and acquired, as well, a pretty correct notion of the state of things in the parish. He whistled still more seriously then. 'It seems to me that the old man has been putting his foot in it here,' he said.

'He has,' Daintry answered solemnly, nodding any number of times. 'No end!'

'And yet he is the very best of fellows,' Jack replied, rubbing his short black hair in honest vexation. 'Don't you like him?'

'I did,' said Daintry, speaking for both of them.

'And you do not now?'

The child reddened, and rubbed herself shyly against Kate's chair. 'Well, not so much!' she murmured, Jack's eyes upon her. 'He is too big a swell for us.'

'Oh, that is it, is it?' Jack said contemptuously.

He pressed the matter no farther, and appeared to have forgotten the subject; but presently, when he was alone with Kate, he recurred to it. 'So, Lindo has been putting on airs, has he?' he observed. 'Yet, I thought when Daintry wrote to me, after you left us, that she seemed to like him.'

'He was very kind and pleasant to us on our journey,' Kate answered, compelling herself to speak with indifference. 'But—well, you know, my father and he have not got on well; so, of course, we have seen little of him lately.'

'Oh, that is all, is it?' Jack answered, moving restlessly in his chair.

'That is all,' said Kate quietly.

This seemed to satisfy Jack, for at tea he surprised her—and

as for Daintry, she fairly leapt in her seat—by calmly announcing that he proposed to call on the rector in the course of the evening. 'You have no objection, sir, I hope,' he said, coolly looking across at his host. 'He has been a friend of mine for years, and though I hear you and he are at odds at present, it seems to me that that need not make mischief between us.'

'N—no,' said Mr. Bonamy slowly. 'I do not see why it should.'

Nevertheless, the lawyer was greatly astonished. He had heard that Jack and Mr. Lindo were acquainted, but he had thought nothing of it. It is possible that this discovery of something more than acquaintance existing between the two led him to take new views of the rector, for after a pause he continued, 'I dare say in private he is not an objectionable man, now?'

'Quite the reverse, I should say!' Jack answered stoutly.

'You have known him for some time?'

'For a long time, and very well.'

'Umph! Then it seems to me it is a pity he does not confine himself to private life,' the lawyer concluded with a characteristic touch. 'As a rector I do not like him!'

'I am sorry for that,' Jack answered cheerfully. 'But I have not known much of him as a rector, you see, sir. Though indeed, as it happens, he brought the offer of the living straight to me, and I was the first person who congratulated him on his promotion.'

Mr. Bonamy lifted his eyes slowly from the tea cup he was raising to his lips, and looked fixedly at his visitor, his face wearing an expression much resembling strong curiosity. If a question was on the tip of his tongue he refrained from putting it, however; and Jack, who by no means wished to hear the tale of his friend's shortcomings repeated, said no more until they rose from the table. Then he remarked, 'Lindo dines late, I expect?'

He put the question to Kate, but the lawyer answered it. 'Oh, yes, he does everything which is fashionable,' he said dryly. And Jack, putting this and that together, began to see still more clearly how the land lay, and on what shoals his friend had wrecked his popularity.

About half-past eight he went to the rectory, but found that Lindo was not at home. The door was opened to him, however, by Mrs. Baxter, who had often seen the barrister in the East India Dock Road, and knew him well; and she pressed him to walk in and wait. 'He dined at home, sir,' she explained. 'I think he

has only slipped out for a few minutes. I am sure he would wish you to wait.'

He followed her accordingly across the panelled hall to the study, where for a moment a whimsical smile played upon his face as he viewed its spacious comfort. The curtains were drawn, the fire was burning redly, and the lamp was turned half down. The housekeeper made as if she would have turned it up, but he prevented her. 'I like it as it is,' he said genially. 'This is better than No. 383, Mrs. Baxter?'

'Well, sir,' she answered, looking round with an air of modest proprietorship, 'it is a bit more like.'

'What would you have?' he asked, laughing. 'The bishop's palace?'

'We may come to that in time, sir,' she answered, folding her arms demurely. 'But I do not know that I would wish it! He has a peck of troubles now, and there would be more in a palace, I doubt.'

'I agree with you,' Jack replied, laughing. 'Troubles come thick about an apron, Mrs. Baxter.'

'Ay, the men see to that!' the good lady retorted. And, having got the last word, she went away delighted.

Left alone, Jack lay back in an arm-chair, and, nursing his hat, wondered what Mrs. Baxter would say when she discovered his connection with the Bonamys. From this his thoughts passed to Kate, but he had not been seated musing two minutes before he heard the door of the house open and shut, and a man's tread cross the hall. The next moment the study door opened, and a tall man appeared at it, and stood holding it and looking into the room. The hall lamp was behind the newcomer, and Jack, seeing that he was not the rector, sat still.

The stranger seemed to be satisfying himself that the room was empty, for after pausing a moment, he stepped in and closed the door behind him; and, rapidly crossing the floor, stood before one of the bookcases. He took something—a key Jack judged by what followed—from his pocket, and with it he swiftly threw open a cupboard among the books.

There was nothing remarkable in the action; but the stranger's manner was so hurried and nervous, that the looker-on leaned forward, curious to learn what he was about. He expected to see him take something from the cupboard. Instead, the man appeared to put something in. What it was, however, Jack could not discern,

for, leaning forward too far in his anxiety to do so, he upset his hat with some noise on to the floor.

The man started on the instant as if he had been subjected to a galvanic shock, and, turning, stood gazing in the direction of the noise. Jack heard him draw in his breath with the sharp sound of sudden fear, and even by that light could see that his face was drawn and white. The barrister rose quietly in the gloom, the stranger at sight of him leaning back against the bookcase as if his legs refused to support him. Yet he was the first to speak. 'Who is there?' he said, almost in a whisper.

'A visitor,' Jack answered simply. 'I have been waiting to see Mr. Lindo.'

The curate—for he it was—drew a long breath, apparently of relief; in reality of such heartfelt thankfulness as he had never known before. 'What a start you gave me!' he murmured, his voice as yet scarcely under his control. 'I am Mr. Clode, Mr. Lindo's curate. I was putting up some parish papers, and thought the room was empty.'

'So I saw,' Jack answered dryly. 'I am afraid your nerves are a little out of order.'

The curate muttered something which was inaudible, and, raising his hand to the bookcase, locked the cupboard door and put the key in his pocket. Then he went to the lamp and turned it up. At the same moment Jack, recovering his hat, advanced into the circle of light, and the two men looked at one another. 'I am afraid if you wish to see the rector you will be disappointed,' the curate said, with something of hauteur in his voice, assumed to hide his suspicions. 'He was to spend the evening at Mrs. Hammond's. I doubt if he will be back before midnight.'

'Then I must call another time,' Jack said practically.

'If I see him first, can I tell him anything for you?' the curate persisted. Who was this man? Could he be a detective? The idea was preposterous, yet it occurred to him.

But Jack was so far from being a detective that he had dismissed the suspicions he had at first entertained. 'I think not, thank you,' he answered. 'I will call again.'

'Can I give him any name?' Clode asked in the last resort.

'Well, you might say Jack Smith called,' the barrister answered, 'if you will be so kind.'

They parted at the door, and Clode went back into the house, where he speedily learned all that Mrs. Baxter knew of Mr. Smith.

It dispelled his first fear. The man was not a detective; still it sent him home gloomy and ill at ease. What if so intimate a friend of the rector, as this Smith seemed to be, should tell him of his curate's visit to the cupboard, and the excuse which on the spur of the moment he had invented? It might go ill with him then. What explanation could he give? He tried to consider such a mishap impossible, or at all events unlikely; but not with complete success. More than ever he wished that he had not meddled with the letters.

To return to Jack, whose presence was shedding gladness on the Bonamy household. Such mild festivities as the bazaar were not uncommon in Claversham, but the Bonamys had not been wont to look forward to them with anything approaching exhilaration. It is wonderful how children growing up in social shadow learn the fact. Daintry Bonamy, scarcely less than her sister, had come to regard the annual flower-show, the school sports, and the regatta with distaste and repugnance, as occasions of little pleasure and much humiliation. It was Mr. Bonamy's will, however, that they should attend, though he never went himself; and times innumerable they had done so, outwardly in pretty dresses and becoming hats, inwardly in sackcloth and ashes.

Jack's presence changed all this, and for once the girls went up quite gaily to dress. If Kate reflected that Jack's intimacy with the rector would be likely to bring them also into contact with him, she said nothing; and from Jack—for the present at least—it was mercifully hidden that, with all his kindness, his unfailing good-humour, his wit, his devotion to her, his chief attraction in the girl's eyes lay in the fact that he was another man's friend.

When they entered the Assembly Room it was already well filled, the main concourse being about the two stalls at the end of the room over which the archdeacon's wife and Mrs. Hammond respectively ruled. Here the great people were mainly to be seen; and an acute observer would soon have discovered that between those who habitually hung about this end and those who surrounded the four lower stalls there was a great gulf fixed. Those on the one side of this examined the dresses of those on the other with indulgent interest, and, for the most part, through double eyeglasses; while those on the other hand either returned the compliment and made careful notes, or looked about deferentially for a glance of recognition. The man who should have

bridged that gulf, who should have been equally at home with Mrs. Archdeacon and the hotel-keeper's wife, was the rector. But the rector had heard on his entrance the unlucky word 'writ,' and he was in his most unpleasant humour. He felt that the whole room were talking of him—the majority with a narrow dislike, a few with sympathy. Was it unnatural that, forgetting his situation, he should throw in his lot with his friends, who were ever so much the pleasanter, the wittier, the more amusing, and present a smiling front of defiance to his opponents or those whom he thought to be such? At any rate, that was what he was doing; and no one could remark the carriage of his head or the direction of his eyes without feeling that there was something in the townsfolk's complaint that the new clergyman was above his work.

Jack and his party did not at once come across him. They found enough to amuse them at the lower end of the room—the more as to the barrister the great and the little with whom he rubbed shoulders were all one. Strange to say, he did not discern any great difference even in their dress! With Daintry hanging on his arm and Kate at his side, he was content, until, turning suddenly in the thick of the crowd to speak to the elder girl, he saw her face become crimson. At the same moment she bowed slightly to some one behind him. He looked round quickly, with a sharp jealous pang at his heart, to learn who had called forth this show of emotion. He found himself face to face with the rector.

Lindo had looked forward to this meeting. He had prepared himself for it. And yet, occurring in this way, it shook him out of his self-possession. He coloured almost as deeply as the girl had coloured, and, though he held out his hand without any perceptible pause, the action was nervous and jerky. 'By Jove! is it you, Jack?' he said, his tone a mixture of old cordiality and rising antagonism. 'How do you do, Miss Bonamy?' and he held out his hand to the girl also, who just touched it with her fingers and drew back. 'It is pleasant to see your cousin's face again,' he went on more glibly, yet clearly not at his ease. 'I was sorry that I was not at home last night when he called.'

'Yes, I was sorry to miss you,' Jack answered slowly, his eyes on his friend's face. He could not quite understand matters. His cousin's embarrassment had been almost a revelation to him, and yet it flashed across his mind now that the cause of it might be only the quarrel between her father and the rector. The

same thing would account for Lindo's shy, ungenial manner. And yet—and yet he could not quite understand it, and, whether he would or no, his face grew hard. 'You heard I had looked in?' he continued.

'Yes; Mrs. Baxter told me,' Lindo answered, moving slightly to let some one pass him; then glancing aside to smile a recognition.

'She looks the better for the change, I think.'

'Yes; she gets more fresh air now.'

'It does not seem to have done you much good.'

'No?'

Altogether it was rather pitiful. They were old, tried college friends, or had been so a few weeks back, and they had nothing more to say to one another than this! The rector's self-consciousness began to infect the other, sowing in his mind he knew not what suspicions. So that, if ever Daintry's interposition was welcome, it was welcome now. 'Jack is going to stay a week,' she said inconsequently, standing on one leg the while, with her arm through Jack's and her big eyes on the rector's face.

'I am very glad to hear it,' Lindo answered. 'He will find me at home more than once in the week, I hope.'

'I shall come and try,' said Jack stoutly.

'Of course you will!' the rector replied, with a flash of his old manner. 'I shall be glad if you will remind him of his promise, Miss Bonamy.'

Kate murmured that she would.

'You like your house?' Jack said.

'Oh, very much—very much indeed.'

'It is an improvement on No. 383?' continued the barrister, rather dryly.

'It is—very much so!'

The words were natural. They were the words Jack expected. But, unfortunately, Gregg at that moment passed the rector's elbow, and the latter's manner was cold and shy—almost as if he resented the reference to his old life. Jack thought he did, and his lip curled. Fortunately, Daintry again intervened. 'Here is Miss Hammond,' she said. 'She is looking for you, Mr. Lindo.'

The rector turned as Laura, threading her way through the press, came smiling towards him. She glanced with some curiosity at Jack, and then nodded graciously to Kate, whom she knew at the Sunday school, and through meeting her on such occasions as this. 'How do you do, Miss Bonamy?' she said pleasantly.

'Will you pardon me if I carry off the rector? We want him to come to tea.'

Kate bowed, and the rector took off his hat to the girls. Then he waved an awkward farewell to Jack, muttered 'See you soon!' and went off with his captor.

And that was all! Jack turned away with his cousins to the nearest stall, and bought and chatted. But he did both at random. His thoughts were elsewhere. He was a keen observer, and he had seen too much for comfort, yet not enough for comprehension. Nor did the occasional glance which he shot at Kate's preoccupied face, as she bent over the woolwork and 'guaranteed hand-paintings,' tend to clear up his doubts or render his mood more cheerful.

Meanwhile the rector's frame of mind, as he rejoined his party, was not a whit more enviable. He was angry with himself, angry with his friend. The sight of Jack standing by Kate's side had made his own conduct to the girl at their last interview appear in a worse light than before—more churlish, more ungrateful. He wished now—but morosely, not with any tenderness of regret—that he had sought some opportunity of saying a word of apology to her. And then Jack? He fancied he saw condemnation written on Jack's face, and that he too, to whom, in the old days, he had confided all his aspirations and resolves, was on the enemy's side—was blaming him for being on bad terms with his churchwardens, and for having already come to blows with half his parish.

It was not pleasant. But the more unpleasant things he had to face, the higher he would hold his head. He disengaged himself presently—the Hammonds had already preceded him—from the throng and bustle of the heated room, and went down the stairs alone. Outside it was already dark, and small rain was falling in the dull streets. The outlook was wretched, and yet in his present mood he found a trifling satisfaction in the respect with which the crowd of ragamuffins about the door fell back to give him passage. With it all, he was some one. He was rector of the town.

At the Hammonds' door he found a carriage waiting in the rain. It was not one he knew, and as he placed his umbrella in the stand he asked the servant whose it was.

'It is Lord Dynmore's, sir,' the man answered, in his low trained voice. 'His lordship is in the drawing-room, sir.'

CHAPTER XVI.

'LORD DYNMORE IS HERE.'

LORD DYNMORE had arrived a few minutes only before the rector found his carriage at the door. Naturally enough, when he trotted at the heels of the servant into Mrs. Hammond's drawing-room, his entrance, unexpected as it was, caused a flutter among those assembled there. Lords are still lords in the country. Mrs. Hammond's sensations on seeing him were wholly those of pleasure. She was pleased to see him. She was still more pleased that he had chosen to call at so opportune a moment, when his light would not be hidden, and James had on his best waistcoat. And so she rose to meet him with a beaming smile, and a cordiality only chastened by the knowledge that Mrs. Homfray and the archdeacon's wife were observing her with critical jealousy. 'Why, Lord Dynmore,' she exclaimed, 'this is most kind of you!'

'How d'ye do? how d'ye do?' said the peer as he advanced. He was a slight, short man, with bushy grey whiskers and grizzled hair which, being rather long, strayed over the fur collar of his overcoat. A noble aquiline nose and keen eyes helped to give him, despite his short stature, an air of dignity. 'How d'ye do? Why,' he continued, looking round, 'you are quite *en fête* here.'

'We have been at a bazaar, Lord Dynmore,' Laura answered. She was rather a favourite with him and could 'say things.' 'I think you ought to have been there too, to patronise it. We did not know that you were in the country, but we sent you a card.'

'Never heard a word of it!' his lordship replied positively.

'But you must have had the card,' persisted Laura.

'Never heard a word of it!' his lordship repeated. He had by this time shaken hands with everyone in the room. When the company was not too large he made a rule of doing this, thereby obviating the ill results of a bad memory, and earning considerable popularity. 'Archdeacon, you are looking very well,' he continued.

'I think I may say the same of you,' answered the clerical dignitary. 'You have had good sport?'

'Capital! capital!' replied the peer in his jerky way. 'But it won't last my time! In two years there will not be a head of buffalo in the States! By the way, I saw your nephew.'

'My nephew!' echoed the archdeacon.

'Yes. Had him up to dinner in Kansas city. A good fellow —a very good fellow. He put me up to one or two things worth knowing.'

'But, Lord Dynmore, you must be thinking of some one else!' replied the archdeacon in a fretful tone. 'It could not be my nephew: I have not a nephew out there.'

'No?' replied the earl. 'Then it must have been the dean's. Or perhaps it was old Canon Frampton's—I am not sure now. But he was a good fellow, an excellent fellow!' And my lord looked round and wagged his head knowingly.

The archdeacon's niece, a young lady who had not seen the peer before, nor indeed any peers, and who consequently was busily making a study of him, looked surprised. Not so the others. They knew him and his ways. It was popularly believed that Lord Dynmore could keep two things, and two only, in his mind—the head of game he had killed in each and every year since he first carried a gun; and the amount of his annual income from the time of the property coming to him.

'There have been changes in the parish since you were here last,' said Mrs. Hammond, deftly intervening. She saw that the archdeacon looked a little put out. 'Poor Mr. Williams is gone.'

'Ah! to be sure! to be sure!' replied the earl. 'Poor old chap! He was a friend of my father's, and now you have a friend of mine in his place. From generation to generation, you know. I remember now,' he continued, tugging at his whiskers peevishly, 'that I meant to see Lindo before I called here. I must look him up by-and-by.'

'I hope he will save you the trouble,' Mrs. Hammond answered. 'I am expecting him every minute.'

'Capital! capital! He is a good fellow now, isn't he? A really good fellow! I am sure you ought to be much obliged to me for sending you such a cheery soul, Mrs. Hammond. And he is not so very old,' the earl added, looking round him waggishly. 'Not too old, you know, Miss Hammond. Young for his years, at any rate.'

Laura laughed and coloured a little—what would offend in a commoner, is in a peer pure drollery. And, as it happened, at this moment the rector came in. The news of the earl's presence had kindled a spark of elation in his eye. He had not waited for the servant to announce him; and as he stood a second at the door closing it, he confronted the company, which he knew included his patron, with an air of modest dignity which more than one

remarked. His glance rested momentarily upon the figure of the earl, who was the only stranger in the room, and whom consequently he had no difficulty in identifying; and he seemed to hesitate whether he should address him. On second thoughts, however, he decided not to do so, and advanced to Mrs. Hammond. 'I am afraid I scarcely deserve any tea,' he said pleasantly, 'I am so late.'

Laura, who had risen, touched his arm. 'Lord Dynmore is here,' she said in a low voice, which was nevertheless distinctly heard by all. 'I do not think you have seen him.'

He took it as an informal introduction, and turned to Lord Dynmore, who was leaning against the fireplace, toying with his teacup and talking to Mrs. Homfray. The young clergyman advanced a step and held out his hand, a slight flush on his cheek. 'There is no one whom I ought to be better pleased to see than yourself, Lord Dynmore,' he said with feeling. 'I have been looking forward for some time to this meeting.'

'Ah, to be sure,' the peer replied, holding out his hand readily, though he looked surprised, and was secretly completely mystified by the other's earnestness. 'I am pleased to meet you, I am sure. Greatly pleased.'

The listeners, who had heard what he had just said about his old friend the rector, stared. Only the person to whom the words were addressed saw nothing odd in them. 'You have not long returned to England, I think?' he observed.

'No; came back last Saturday night. And how is the rector? Where is he? Why does he not show up? I understood Mrs. Hammond to say he was coming.'

The archdeacon, Mrs. Hammond, all in the room were dumb with astonishment. Even Lindo was surprised, thinking it very dull in the earl not to guess at once that he was the new incumbent. No one answered, and the peer, glancing sharply round, discerned that something was wrong—that, in fact, everyone was at a loss. 'Eh! Oh, I see,' he resumed in a different tone. 'You are not one of his curates? I made a mistake, I suppose. Took you for one of his curates, do you see? That was all. Beg your pardon. Beg your pardon, I am sure. But where is he?'

'This *is* the rector, Lord Dynmore,' the archdeacon said in an uncertain, puzzled way.

'No, no, no, no,' replied the great man fretfully. 'I mean the old rector—my old friend.'

'He has forgotten that poor Mr. Williams is dead,' Laura murmured to her mother, amid a general pause of astonishment.

He overheard her. 'Nothing of the kind, young lady!' he answered irritably. 'Nothing of the kind. Bless my soul! do you think I do not know whom I present to my own livings? My memory is not so bad as that! I thought this gentleman was Lindo's curate, that was all. That was all.'

They stared at one another in awkward silence. The rector was the first to speak. 'I am afraid we are somehow at cross purposes still, Lord Dynmore,' he stammered, his manner stiff and constrained. 'I am not my own curate because, if I may say so, I am myself—Reginald Lindo, whom you were kind enough to present to this living.'

'To Clavershame, do you mean?'

'Yes.'

'And do you say you are Reginald Lindo?' The peer straightened himself and grew very red in the face as he put the question.

'Yes, certainly I am.'

'Then, sir, I say that certainly you are not!' was the startling answer. 'Certainly you are not! You are no more Reginald Lindo than I am!' the peer repeated, striking his hand upon the table by his side, and seeming to swell with rage. 'What do you mean by saying that you are, eh? What do you mean by it?'

'Lord Dynmore——'

But Lord Dynmore would not listen. 'Who are you, sir? Answer me that question first!' he cried. He was a choleric man, and he saw by this time that there was something seriously amiss; so that the shocked, astonished faces round him tended rather to increase than lessen his wrath. 'Answer me that!'

'I think, Lord Dynmore, that you must be mad,' the rector replied, his lips quivering. 'I am as certainly Reginald Lindo as you are Lord Dynmore!'

'But what are you doing here?' the other retorted, raising his hand, and storming down the interruption which the archdeacon would have effected. 'That is what I want to know. Who made you rector of Clavershame?'

'The bishop, my lord,' answered the young man sternly.

'Ay, but on whose presentation?'

'On yours.'

'On mine?'

'Most assuredly,' replied the clergyman doggedly—'as the archdeacon here, who inducted me, can bear witness.'

'It is false!' Lord Dynmore almost screamed. He turned to the panic-stricken listeners, who had instinctively grouped themselves round the two, and appealed to them. 'I presented a man nearly thrice his age, do you hear!—a man of sixty. Do you understand that? As for this—this Reginald Lindo, I never heard of him in my life! Never! If he had letters of presentation, I did not give them to him. That is all I can say!'

The young clergyman's eyes flashed, and his face grew hard as a stone. He guessed already the misfortune which had happened to him, and his heart was sore, as well as full of wrath. But in his pride he betrayed only the anger. 'Lord Dynmore,' he said fiercely, 'you will have to answer for these insinuations. If there has been any error, the fault has not lain with me!'

'Any error! Any error! An error, you call it, do you? Let me——'

'Oh, Lord Dynmore!' Mrs. Hammond gasped.

'One moment, Lord Dynmore, if you please.' This came from the archdeacon; and, though the other would have repulsed him, he persisted, placing himself between the two men, and almost laying his hands on the excited peer. 'If there has been a mistake,' he urged, 'a few words will make it clear. I fully believe—nay, I feel sure—that my friend here is not in fault, whoever is.'

'Ask your questions,' grunted my lord, breathing hard, and eyeing the young clergyman as a terrier eyes the taller dog it means to attack. 'He will not answer them, trust me!'

'I think he will,' replied the archdeacon with decision. His *esprit de corps* was rising. The earl's rude insistence disgusted him. He noticed, his eyes wandering for a moment while he considered how he should frame his question, that another person, Mr. Clode, had silently entered the room, and was listening with a darkly thoughtful face. It occurred then to the archdeacon to suggest that the ladies should withdraw; but then again it seemed fair that, as they had heard the charges, they should hear what answer the rector had to make; and he proceeded. 'First, Lord Dynmore,' he said gravely, 'I must ask you whom you intended to present.'

'My old friend, Reginald Lindo, of course.'

'His address, if you please,' the archdeacon continued rather curtly.

'Somewhere in the East End of London,' the earl answered. 'Oh, I remember now, St. Gabriel's, Aldgate.'

The archdeacon turned silently to the clergyman. 'He was my uncle,' Lindo explained gravely. 'He died a year ago last October.'

'Died!' The exclamation was Lord Dynmore's.

'Yes, died,' the young man retorted bitterly. 'Your lordship keeps a watchful eye upon your friends, it seems!'

The shaft went home. The earl caught a quick breath, and his face fell. The words awoke a slumbering chord in his memory, and recalled—not, as might have been expected, old days of frolic and sport spent with the friend whose death was thus coldly flung in his face—but a scene in another world. He saw in fancy a rock-bound valley, inclosed by hills which rose in giant steps to the snowy line of the Andes; and in its depths a tiny hunter's camp. He saw an Indian fishing in the brook, and near him a white man wandering away—a letter in his hand. Then he remembered a shot, an alarm, a hasty striking of the tent, and for many hours, even days, a rapid, dangerous march. In the excitement the letter had been forgotten, to be recalled with its tidings—here, and now.

He winced, and muttered, 'By heavens, and I *had* heard it!'

The clergyman caught the words, and his resentment waxed hot. 'My uncle's death,' he resumed grimly, in the tone of one rather making than answering an accusation, 'occurred a year before the presentation was offered to me by your solicitors!'

'Lord help us!' said the peer in a helpless, bewildered tone. 'You are a clergyman, sir, I suppose?'

'That is a fresh insult, Lord Dynmore!' Lindo replied warmly.

'Hoity-toity!' my lord retorted, recovering himself quickly, 'you are a fine man to talk of insults! And you in my living without a shadow of title to it! You must have had some suspicion, sir, some idea that all was not right.'

'I think I can answer for Mr. Lindo there!' interposed the curate, stepping forward for the first time. His face was deeply flushed, and he spoke hurriedly, without looking up; perhaps, because all eyes were on him. 'When Mr. Lindo came here, I expected, for certain reasons, an older man. I heard by chance from him—I think it was on the evening of his arrival—that he had not long lost an uncle of the same name, and it occurred to me then as just possible that there might have been a mistake.

But I particularly observed that he was perfectly free from any suspicion of that kind himself.'

'Pooh! There is nothing in that!' the archdeacon replied snappishly.

'On the contrary, I think there is a great deal in it!' cried the earl in a voice of triumph. 'A great deal in it. If the idea occurred to a stranger, is it possible that the incumbent's own mind could be free from it? Is it possible, I say?'

'Is it possible,' the rector answered viciously, a ring as of steel in his voice, 'that a man who had his dear friend's death announced to him could forget the news in a year, and think of him as still alive?'

The earl gasped with passion. Never before had anyone addressed him in that way. By a tremendous effort he refrained from using bad words; he even forbore, in view of the alarmed looks of the ladies and the archdeacon's hasty expostulation, to call his opponent a villain or a scoundrel. He only stammered, 'You—you—are you going to give up my living?'

'No,' was the answer.

'You are not?'

'Certainly I am not!' the rector repeated. 'If you had treated me differently, Lord Dynmore,' he continued, speaking with his arms crossed and his lips set tight in contempt and defiance, 'my answer might have been different! Now, though the mistake has lain with yourself or your people, you have accused me of fraud! You have treated me as an impostor! You have dared to ask me, though I have been ministering to the people in this parish for months, whether I am a clergyman! You have insulted me grossly, and, so doing, have put it out of my power to resign had I been so minded! And you may be sure I shall not resign.'

He looked a very hero as he flung down his defiance. But the earl cared nothing for his looks. 'You will not?' he stuttered.

'No! I acknowledge no authority whatever in you,' was the answer. 'You are *functus officio*. I am subject to the bishop, and to him only.'

'Give me my hat,' the peer mumbled, turning abruptly away; and, tugging up the collar of his coat, he began to grope about in a manner which at another time would have been laughable. 'Give me my hat, some one,' he repeated. 'Let me get out before I swear. I am *functus officio*, am I? I have never been so in-

sulted in my life! Never, so help me heaven! Never! Let me get out! *Functus officio*, am I!'

They made way for him in a kind of panic, and his murmurs died away in the hall, Mr. Clode with much presence of mind opening the door for him and letting him out. When he was gone, in the room he had left there was absolute silence. The men avoided one another's eyes. The women, their lips parted, looked each at her neighbour. Mrs. Homfray, the young wife of an old husband, was the first to speak. 'Well, I never!' she murmured. 'What an old bear!'

That broke the spell. The rector, who had stood gazing darkly, with flushed brow and compressed lips, at the hearthrug, roused himself. 'I think I had better go,' he said, his tone cold and ungracious. 'You will excuse me, I am sure, Mrs. Hammond. Good night. Good night.'

The archdeacon took a step forward, with the intention of intercepting him; but thought better of it, and stopped, seeing that the time was not propitious. So, save to murmur an answer to his general farewell, no one spoke; and Lindo left the room under the impression, though he himself had set the tone, that he stood alone among them—that he had not their sympathies. He carried away this feeling with him, and it added to his unhappiness, and to the pride with which he endured it. But at the moment he was scarcely aware of the impression. The blow had fallen so swiftly, it was so unexpected and so crushing, that he went out into the darkness stunned and bewildered, conscious only, as are men whom some sudden accident has befallen, that in a moment all was changed with him.

An hour later Mrs. Hammond and her daughter alone remained. The last of the visitors had departed, the dinner hour was long past; but they still sat on, fascinated by the topic, reproducing for one another's benefit the extraordinary scene they had witnessed, and discussing its probable consequences. 'I am sure, absolutely sure, poor fellow, that he knew nothing about it,' Mrs. Hammond declared for the twentieth time.

'So the archdeacon seemed to think, mamma,' Laura answered. 'And yet he said that probably Mr. Lindo would have to go.'

'Because of the miserable attacks these people have made upon him!' Mrs. Hammond rejoined with indignation. 'But think of the pity of it! Think of the income! And such a house as it is!'

'It *is* a nice house,' Laura assented, gazing thoughtfully into the fire, a slight access of colour in her cheeks.

'I think it is abominable!'

'Besides,' Laura said, continuing her chain of reflection, 'there is the view from the drawing-room windows.'

'Of course, it is too bad! It is really too bad! I declare I am quite upset, I am so sorry for him. Lord Dynmore ought to be ashamed of himself!'

'Yes,' Laura assented rather absently, 'I quite agree with you, mamma. And as for the hall, with a Persian rug or two it would be quite as good as an extra room.'

'What hall? Oh, at the rectory?'

'Yes.'

Mrs. Hammond rose with a quick, pettish air of annoyance. 'Upon my word, Laura,' she exclaimed, drawing a little shawl about her comfortable shoulders, 'you seem to think more of the house than of the poor fellow himself! Let us go to dinner. It is half-past eight, and after.'

CHAPTER XVII.

THE LAWYER AT HOME.

If Mr. Clode, when he stepped forward to open the door for Lord Dynmore, had any thought beyond that of facilitating his departure —if, for instance, he anticipated having a private word with the peer—he was disappointed. Lord Dynmore, after what had happened, was in no mood for conversation. As, still muttering and mumbling, he seized his hat from the hall table, he did indeed notice his companion, but it was with the red and angry glare of a bull about to charge. The next moment he plunged headlong into his brougham, and roared 'Home.'

His servants knew his ways, and the carriage bounded away into the darkness of the drive, as if it would reach the Park at a leap. But it had barely cleared Mrs. Hammond's gates, and was still rattling over the stony pavement of the Top of the Town, when the footman heard his master lower the window and shout 'Stop!' The horses were pulled up as suddenly as they had been started, and the man got down and went to the door. 'Do you know where Mr. Bonamy the lawyer's offices are?' Lord Dynmore asked curtly.

'Yes, my lord.'

'Then drive there!'

The footman climbed to the box again. 'What has bitten him now, I wonder?' he grumbled to his companion as he passed on the order. 'He is in a fine tantrum in there!'

'Who cares?' retorted the coachman, with a coachman's fine independence. 'If old Bonamy is in, there will be a pair of them!'

And Mr. Bonamy was in. In that particular Lord Dynmore had better luck than he perhaps deserved. Late as it was for business—it was after seven—the gas was still burning in the lawyer's offices, illuminating the fanlight over the door and the windows of one of the rooms on the ground floor—the right-hand room. The servant jumped down and rapped, and his summons was answered almost immediately by Mr. Bonamy himself, who jerked open the door, and stood holding it ajar, with the air of a man interrupted in the middle of his work, and bent on sending the intruder off with a flea in his ear. Catching sight of the earl's carriage, however, and the servant murmuring that my lord wished to see him on business, the lawyer stepped forward, his expression changing to one of surprise.

The Dynmore business had been always transacted in London. In cases where a country agent became necessary the London solicitors had invariably employed a firm in Birmingham. Neither Mr. Bonamy nor the other Claversham lawyer had ever risen to the dignity of being concerned for Lord Dynmore, nor could Mr. Bonamy recall any occasion in the past on which the great man had crossed the threshold of his office.

His appearance now, therefore, was almost as welcome as it was unexpected. Yet from some cause, perhaps the lateness of the hour, though that would seem to be improbable, there was a visible embarrassment in the lawyer's manner as he recognised him; and Mr. Bonamy only stepped aside to make way for him to enter upon hearing from his own lips that he desired to speak with him.

Then he opened the door of the room on the left of the hall. 'If your lordship will take a seat here,' he said, 'I will be with you in a moment.'

The room was in darkness, but he struck a match and lit the gas, placing a chair for Lord Dynmore, who, fretting and fuming and more than half inclined to walk out again, said sharply that he had only a minute to spare.

'I shall not be a minute, my lord,' the lawyer answered.

And he retired at once, closing the door behind him, and went, as his visitor could hear, into the opposite room. Lord Dynmore looked round impatiently. He had not so high an opinion of his own importance as have some who are not peers. But he was choleric and accustomed to have his own way, and he thought that at least this local man whom he was going to patronise might receive him with more respect.

Mr. Bonamy, however, was as good as his word. In less than a minute he was back. Closing the door carefully behind him, he sat down at the table. 'I am entirely at your lordship's service now,' he said, bowing slightly.

The earl laid his hat on the table. 'Very well,' he answered abruptly. 'I have heard that you are a sharp fellow, Mr. Bonamy, and a good lawyer, and that is why I have come to you—that and the fact that my business will not wait and I have a mind to punish those confounded London people who have let me into this mess!'

That it was rather impatience than anything else which had brought him he betrayed by getting up and striding across the room. Meanwhile the lawyer, golden visions of bulky settlements and interminable leases floating before his eyes, murmured his anxiety to be of service, and waited to hear more.

'It is about that confounded sneak of a rector of yours!' my lord exclaimed, coming at last to a stand before the table.

Mr. Bonamy started, his visions fading rapidly away. 'Our rector?' he replied, gazing at his client in great astonishment. 'Mr. Lindo, my lord?'

'The man who calls himself your rector!' the earl growled. 'He is no more a rector than I am, and pretty fools you were to be taken in by him!'

'Now that is odd!' the lawyer answered. He spoke absently, his eyes resting on the peer's face as if his thoughts had strayed far away.

'Odd or not,' Lord Dynmore replied, stamping on the floor with undiminished irritation, 'it is the fact, sir! It is the fact! And now if you will listen to me I will tell you what I want you to do.'

The lawyer bowed again, and the earl proceeded to tell his tale. Passing lightly over his own forgetfulness and negligence, he laid stress on all the facts which seemed to show that Lindo could not have accepted the living in good faith. He certainly made out a plausible case, but his animus in telling it was so

apparent that, when he had finished and wound up by announcing his firm resolve to eject the young man from his cure, Mr. Bonamy only shook his head with a doubtful smile. 'You will have to prove guilty knowledge on his part, my lord,' he said gravely.

'So I will!' cried the earl roundly.

Mr. Bonamy seemed inclined to shake his head again, but he thought better of it. 'Well, you may be right, my lord,' he answered. 'At any rate—without going further into the matter at this moment, or considering what course your lordship could or should adopt—I think I can do one thing. I can lay some information on this point before you at once.'

'What! To show that he knew?' cried the earl, leaning forward eagerly.

'Yes, I think so. But as to its weight——'

'What is it? What is it? Let me hear it!' was the impatient interruption. The earl was on his feet in a moment. 'Why, gadzooks, we may have him in a corner before the day is out, Mr. Bonamy,' he continued. 'True? I will be bound it is true!'

Mr. Bonamy looked as if he very much doubted that; but he offered no further opposition. Begging Lord Dynmore—who could not disguise his admiration, so much was he struck with this strange preparedness—to excuse him for a moment, he left the room. He returned almost immediately, however, followed by a man whom the earl at once recognised, and recognised with the utmost astonishment. 'Why, you confounded rascal!' he gasped, jumping up again, and staring with all his eyes. 'What are you doing here?'

It was Felton. Yet not the same Felton whose surreptitious visit to the rectory had been cut short by Mr. Clode. A few weeks of idleness and drinking, a month or two at the Bull and Staff, had much changed the once sleek and respectable servant. Had he gone to the rectory for help now, his tale would not have passed muster even for a moment. His coat had come to hang loosely about him, and he wore no tie. His hands were dirty and tremulous, his eyes shifty and bloodshot. His pasty face had grown puffy, and was stained with blotches which it was impossible to misinterpret. He had gone down the hill fast.

Seeing his old master before him he began to whimper; but the lawyer cut him short. 'This man, who says he was formerly your servant, has come to me with a strange story, Lord Dynmore,' he began.

'Ten to one it's a lie!' replied the peer, scowling darkly at the poor wretch.

'So I think likely!' Mr. Bonamy rejoined with a cough and the utmost dryness. 'However, what he says is this: that when he landed in England without a character he considered what he should do; and, remembering that he had heard you say that Mr. Lindo the elder, whom he knew, had been appointed to this living, he came down here to see what he could get out of him.'

'That is likely enough!' cried the peer scornfully.

'When he called at the rectory, however, he found Mr. Lindo the younger in possession. He had an interview with him, and he states that Mr. Lindo, to purchase his silence, as he supposes, undertook to pay him ten shillings a week until your return.'

'Phew!' my lord whistled in astonishment.

The servant mistook his surprise for incredulity. 'He did, my lord!' he cried passionately. 'It is heaven's own truth I am telling! I can bring half a dozen witnesses to prove it.'

'You can?'

'I can, my lord.'

'Yes, but to prove what?' said the lawyer sharply.

'That he paid me ten shillings a week down to last week, my lord.'

'That will do! That will do!' cried the earl in great glee. 'Set a thief to catch a thief—that is the plan!'

Mr. Bonamy looked displeased. 'Pardon me, but are you not a little premature?' he said with some sourness.

'Premature? How?'

'At present you have only this man's word for what is on the face of it a very improbable story.'

'Improbable?' replied the peer quickly, but with less heat. 'I do not see it. He says that he has witnesses to prove that this fellow paid him the money. If that be so, explain the payment if you can. And, mark you, Mr. Bonamy, the allowance stopped last week—on my arrival, don't you see?'

The man cried eagerly that that was so. But the earl at once bade him be silent for the confounded rascal he was. Mr. Bonamy stood rubbing his chin thoughtfully and looking on the floor, but said nothing; so that the great man presently lost patience. 'Don't you agree with me, sir?' he cried irascibly.

'I think we had better get rid of our friend here before we discuss the matter, my lord,' the lawyer answered bluntly. 'Do

you hear, Felton?' he continued, turning to the servant. 'You may go now. Come to me to-morrow morning at ten o'clock, and I will tell you what Lord Dynmore proposes to do in your matter.'

The ex-valet would have demurred to being thus set aside; but the earl roaring 'Go, you scoundrel!' in a voice he had been accustomed to obey, and Mr. Bonamy opening the door for him, he submitted and went. The streets were wet and gloomy, and he was more sober than he had been for a week. In other words, his nerves were shaky, and he soon began, as he lounged homewards, to torment himself with doubts. Had he made the best of his story? Had he been wise to go to the lawyer at all? Might it not have been safer to make a last appeal to the rector? Above all, would Mr. Clode, whose game he did not understand, hold his hand, or play the trump-card by disclosing that little attempt at burglary? Altogether Felton was not happy, and saw before him but one resource—to get home as quickly as possible and get drunk.

Meanwhile the lawyer, left alone with his client, seemed as much averse as before to speaking out. Lord Dynmore had again to take the initiative. 'Well, it is good enough, sir, is it not?' he said, frowning impatiently on his new adviser. 'There is a clear case, I suppose!'

'I think your lordship had better hear first,' Mr. Bonamy answered, 'how your late servant came to bring his story to me.' And then he proceeded to explain the course which the young clergyman had pursued in the parish from the first, and the opposition and ill-will it had provoked. He told the story from his own point of view, but with more fairness than might have been expected; though naturally, when he came to the matter of the sheep-grazing and the writ, he took care to make his own case good. The earl listened and chuckled, and at last interrupted him.

'So you have been at him already?' he said, grinning. 'He is no friend of yours?'

'No,' the lawyer answered slowly. 'I may say, indeed, that I have been in constant opposition to him from the time of his induction. Felton (the man who has just left us) knew that, and it led him to bring his tale to me this evening.'

'When he could get no more money out of the parson!' the earl replied with a sneer. 'But, now, what is to be done, Mr. Bonamy?'

Mr. Bonamy did not at once answer. Instead, he stood looking down, his face perturbed. His doubt and uneasiness, in fact, visibly increased as the seconds flew by, and still Lord Dynmore's

gaze, bent on him at first in impatience and later in surprise, seemed to be striving to probe his thoughts. He looked down at the table and frowned as if displeased by the scrutiny. When at last he spoke, his voice was harsher than usual. 'I do not think, my lord,' he said, 'that I can answer that question.'

'Do you want to take counsel's opinion, then?'

'No, my lord,' Mr. Bonamy answered curtly. 'I mean something different. I do not think, to put it plainly, that I can act for your lordship in this matter.'

'Cannot act for me?' the earl gasped.

'I am afraid not,' Mr. Bonamy answered doggedly, a slight flush as of shame on his sallow cheek. 'I have explained, my lord, that I have been constantly opposed to this young man, but my opposition has been of a public nature and—and upon principle. I have no doubt that he and others consider me his chief enemy in the place. To that I have no objection. But I am unwilling that he or others should think that private interest has had any part in my opposition, and therefore, being churchwarden, I would prefer, even at the risk of offending your lordship, to decline undertaking the business.'

'But why? Why?' cried the earl, between anger and astonishment.

'I have tried to explain,' Mr. Bonamy rejoined with firmness. 'I am afraid I cannot make my reasons clearer.'

The earl swore softly and took up his hat. He really was at a loss to understand; principally because, knowing that Mr. Bonamy had risen from the ranks, he did not credit him with any fineness of feeling. He had heard only that he was a clever and rather sharp practitioner, and a man who might be trusted to make things unpleasant for the other side. He took up his hat and swore softly. 'You are aware,' he said, turning at the door and looking daggers at the solicitor, 'that by taking this course you are throwing away a share of my work?'

Mr. Bonamy, wearing a rather more gaunt and grim air than usual, simply bowed.

'You will act for the other side, I suppose?' my lord snarled.

'I shall not act professionally for anyone, my lord!'

'Then you are a damned quixotic fool—that is all I have to say!' was the earl's parting shot. And, having fired it, he flung out of the room and in great amaze roared for his carriage.

A man is seldom so much inclined—on the surface, at any rate—to impute low motives to others as when he has just done some-

thing which he suspects to be foolish and quixotic. When Mr. Bonamy, a few minutes later, entered his rarely used drawing-room, and discovered Jack and the two girls playing at Patience, he was in his most cynical mood. He stood for a moment on the hearth-rug, his coat-tails on his arms, and presently he said to Jack, 'I am surprised to see you here.'

Jack looked up. The girls looked up also. 'I wonder you are not at the rectory,' Mr. Bonamy continued ironically, 'advising your friend how to keep out of gaol!'

'What on earth do you mean, sir?' Jack exclaimed, laying down his cards and rising from the table. He saw that the lawyer had some news and was anxious to tell it.

'I mean that he is in very considerable danger of going there!' was Mr. Bonamy's quiet answer. 'There has been a scene at Mrs. Hammond's this afternoon. By this time the story should be all over the town. Lord Dynmore turned up there and met him—denounced him as an impostor, and swore he had never presented him to the living.'

For a brief moment no one spoke. Then Daintry found her voice. 'My goody!' she exclaimed, her eyes like saucers. 'Who told you, father?'

'Never you mind, young lady!' Mr. Bonamy retorted with good-humoured sharpness. 'It is true! What is more, I am informed that Lord Dynmore has evidence that Mr. Lindo has been paying a man, who was aware of this, a certain sum every week to keep his mouth shut.'

'My goody!' cried Daintry again. 'I wonder, now, what he paid him! What do you think, Jack?' And she turned to Jack to learn what he was doing that he did not speak.

Poor Jack! Why did he not speak, indeed? Why did he stand silent, gazing hard into the fire? Because he resented his friend's coldness? Because he would not defend him? Because he thought him guilty? No, but because in the first moment of Mr. Bonamy's disclosure he had looked into Kate's face—his cousin's face, who the moment before had been laughing over the cards at his side—and with the keen insight, the painful sympathy which love imparts, he had read in it her secret. Poor Kate! No one else had seen her face fall or discovered her sudden embarrassment. A few seconds later she had regained her ordinary calm composure, even the blood had gone back to her heart. But Jack had seen and read aright. He knew, and she knew that he knew. When at last—but not before Mr. Bonamy's attention had been

drawn to his silence—he turned and spoke, she avoided his eyes. 'That is rather a wild tale, sir, is it not?' he said with an effort, and a pale smile.

If Mr. Bonamy had not been a man of great shrewdness, he would have been tempted to think that Jack had been in the secret all the time. As it was, he only answered, 'I have reason to think that there is something in it, wild as it sounds. At any rate, the man in question has himself told the story to Lord Dynmore.'

'The pensioner?'

'Precisely.'

'Well, I should like to ask him a few questions,' Jack answered drearily. But for the chill feeling at his heart, but for the knowledge he had just gained, he would have treated the matter very differently. He would have thought of his friend only—of his feelings, his possible misery. He would not have condescended in this first moment to the evidence. But now he could not feel for his friend. He could not even pity him. He needed all his pity for himself.

'I do not answer for the story,' Mr. Bonamy continued, little guessing, shrewd as he was, what was happening round him. 'But there is no doubt of one thing—that Mr. Lindo was appointed in error, whether he was aware of the mistake or not. I do not know,' the lawyer added thoughtfully, 'that I shall pity him greatly. He has been very mischievous here. And he has held his head very high.'

'He is the more likely to suffer now,' Jack answered almost cynically.

'Possibly,' the lawyer replied. Then he added, 'Daintry, fetch me my slippers, there is a good girl. Or, stay. Get me a candle and take them to my room.'

He went out after her, leaving the cousins alone. Neither spoke. Jack stood near the corner of the mantelshelf, gazing rigidly, almost sullenly, into the fire. What was Lindo to him? Why should he be sorry for him? A far worse thing had befallen himself. He tried to harden his heart, and to resolve that nothing of his suffering should be visible even to her.

But he had scarcely formed the resolution when his eyes wandered, despite his will, to the pale set face on the other side of the hearth. Suddenly he sprang forward and, almost kneeling, took her hand in both his own. 'Kate,' he whispered, 'is it so? Is there no hope for me, then?'

She, too, had been looking into the fire. She could feel for him now. She no longer thought his attentions 'nonsense' as at the station a while back. But she could not speak. She could only shake her head, the tears in her eyes.

Jack waited a moment. Then he laid down the hand and rose and went back to the fire, and stood looking into it sorrowfully; but his thoughts were no longer wholly of himself. He was a typical gentleman, though he was neither six feet high nor an Adonis. He had scarcely felt the weight of the blow which had fallen on himself, before he began to think what he could do to help her. Presently he put his thought into words. 'Kate,' he said, looking up, and speaking in a voice scarcely above a whisper, 'can I do anything?'

She made no attempt to deny the inference he had drawn. She seemed content, indeed, that he should possess her secret, though the knowledge of it by another would have covered her with shame. But at the sound of his question she only shook her head with a sorrowful smile.

It was all dark to him. He knew nothing of the past—only that the faint suspicion he had felt at the bazaar was justified, and that Kate had given away her heart. He did not dare to ask whether there was any understanding between her and his friend; and, not knowing that, what could he do? Nothing, it seemed to him at first. Then a truly noble thought came into his head. 'I am afraid,' he said slowly, looking at his watch, 'that Lindo is in trouble. I think I will go to him. It is not ten o'clock.'

He tried not to look at her as he spoke, but all the same he saw the crimson tide rise slowly over cheek and brow—over the face which his prayer had left so pure and pale. Her lip trembled and she rose hurriedly, muttering something inaudible. Poor Jack!

For a moment self got the upper hand again, and he stood still, frowning. Then he said gallantly, 'Yes, I think I will go. Will you let my uncle know in case I should be late?'

He did not look at her again, but hurried out of the room. It was a stiff, formal room, we know—a set, comfortless, middle-class room, which had given the rector quite a shock on his first introduction to it. But if it had united all the grace of the halls of Abencerrages to the stately comfort of a sixteenth-century dining-hall it would have been no more than worthy of the man who quitted it.

(*To be continued.*)

THE PLAGUE OF LOCUSTS.

One warm bright day I was strolling up the banks of a little *oued*, or stream, about a hundred miles from Algiers, and, looking on along my path, saw a great line of brush-fire and smoke across the narrow neck of the valley a few miles ahead. That line of smoke marked the spot where an effort was being made to check the Great Invasion (the locust inroad into North Africa this year deserves to be spelt with a capital letter, extending, as it does, from Egypt to Morocco). The dense hordes of Acridians which had crossed the frontiers of their territory, the Sahara, leaving their fastnesses for their annual summer 'outing' in the North, had now thrown forward their advanced-guard so far as this fruitful valley, and, if the effort to check them should be *un*successful, the banks of the stream would be both the cradle and the grave of many of their race.

Now, in their case, the word 'cradle' is synonymous with 'famine,' and 'grave' spells 'pestilence.' This reflection, however, I did not make at that time, for my attention was suddenly drawn to a flock of little birds, not bigger than wrens, that was passing steadily over a long low hillock on my left, heavily clothed in dark furze, and round the corner of which, as round a headland, entry was gained into another large valley that ran up north towards the sea (an offshoot from the valley in which I myself was walking). These little birds were of light yellow and grey, and I had not readily distinguished them in that bright sandy landscape till I noticed them passing over the dark clump of furze into the side valley. Now, looking upward with quickened attention, I saw them passing also overhead (but the entire stream of them set steadily into the other valley), and in an instant the knowledge flashed upon me that these little birds were the locusts.

They were the advanced-guard of the 'flight' that was winging its way up through the great line of smoke, as unconcernedly as though that futile effort to stay them had never been attempted. The smoke was, as I afterwards found by sad experience, villanous enough to choke an ostrich—an ingenious evolution from sulphur and other devilish ingredients; but the only effect it had upon

the locusts was that considerable numbers of them sat down in the grass to cough before resuming their road.

As I advanced, the oncoming swarm grew more dense, till the air was filled with the beating of their wings. At first, hat in hand, I had vainly chased one after another of them, attempting a capture; afterwards, finding my efforts fruitless, I had tied my handkerchief on to the end of my walking-stick butterfly-net-wise, but with no greater success, for the Acridians were too light of wing and too wide-awake to allow themselves to be caught, and warily gave me a wide berth. But now they had no longer room for free play. Filling the valley from side to side, and occupying the air from the ground to a height (so nearly as I could judge) of about two hundred yards, they flew against me till I was glad to cover my face with my arms, leaving the rest of me to be harmlessly cannonaded by their bodies. Looking downwards from under my coat-sleeve shield, I generally saw six or eight locusts upon my waistcoat. They would turn themselves about, so soon as they settled, like a grasshopper on a blade of grass, and then, *hop*! away went two or three, whose places were immediately filled by new-comers.

I left the path and made my way up the hillside, till I was free from the dense stream of them along the bottom of the valley, and then sat down to look at about a dozen that I had now captured and caged in my handkerchief. They were the dreaded yellow and grey (the colour showing the sex) pilgrims. Their bodies, on an average, were as large as my little finger; their closed wings projected about half an inch beyond their tails, and were of much the same shape and texture as those of our English dragon-fly, two on either side, and in flight they had been moved somewhat like those of a butterfly, but with a faster motion.

As I opened the neck of the handkerchief slightly to catch a glimpse of my captives, *hop*! out came one, and away; he nearly carried my right eye with him, and as to a lock of my hair, I remain a little uncertain. The next fellow tried to *creep* out, and, tightening the circle of my thumb and forefinger around the passage as he came out, I took him with the other hand by his back and wings, and held him up for a closer inspection. He stared at me with great beady optics, with a sort of half-stupid, half-cunning grin on his sardonic, ape-like face, but said nothing, and moved neither hand nor hopper; presently, however, he rolled

his head a little on his shoulders, and drew a webbed sort of film over one eye in an unholy leer. I turned him in again among his friends, took him home with me, put him in a cardboard box with a glass lid, and for several days thereafter he and his comrades disturbed my meditations by an obstinate bombardment of the sides and roof of their prison. This bombardment they performed with their heads; from the floor of their box (which was about a foot cube) they 'lit out' with the utmost determination, and must have made their heads ache finely. There is a little passage anent the pressure of gases in Clerk Maxwell's text-book on heat which I never properly understood till I had those locusts; but for obstinacy of bombardment against the envelope, I would almost back my friends against the gas molecules. They ate nothing during those days, though I tempted their appetite with the most dainty meats, and at length, another 'flight' chancing to pass that way, I took my captives out and turned them loose among their fellows. With a *hop*! they were a yard in the air, then, spreading their wings, and presently gathering up their long legs under their bodies, away they went, and never stopped to return me so much as a vote of thanks for my hospitality.

The flight of which they originally formed members had a front of about three miles (regulated by the width of the valley). They travelled fairly fast: sprinting my best along the level path for a hundred yards in the direction of their passage, I must confess to having been outpaced by them. The main body was nearly five hours in passing a given point. Almost the greater number of them flew at a considerable height in the air, but did not perceptibly darken the sky. That night, in the little country *auberge* where I stayed, two team-drivers, one a Spaniard, the other a Sicilian, were comparing notes: one said, that in the midst of the swarm he could not see the sun; the other, that he could not drive his team against them, as the horses refused to face them (which was probably true), and that they were three inches deep on the road (which probably wasn't).

At about four o'clock the locusts pitched down for the night, finding a lodging on the hot, hot ground, in vineyards, cornfields, and a wood or two. The frantic proprietors did all in their power to prevent such a calamity; but one cannot fight a snowstorm, nor a flight of locusts either. In the vineyards the Acridians were *everywhere*; in the cornfields they perched, head upwards, one above the other, four or five on each stalk; in the woods they

massed themselves upon the tree-trunks, facing the declining sun. Thus do they delight to take an afternoon nap after the fatigues of their day's journey, sunning themselves to the last moment, as evening draws on. Especially do they love to find sandy banks, or a good dry road, facing the sunset—and so they rest, motionless, for the night.

Next morning they *ought* to have got up, and, after a hasty toilet and breakfast, they *ought* to have winged their way onward again northwards: they generally start so soon as the sun has dried the air and their wings. But, to the exasperation of the proprietors of the land, they stayed two days, mating and egg-laying, before moving. In this interim many of them died, or were *put* to death: and here we are arrived at a few of the graves.

Before this present year most people believed that after mating and egg-laying the locusts would die a natural death. It isn't true! No doubt vast quantities do die; but these are hardly an appreciable fraction of the whole number.

So, after two days, on went the survivors; they had *eaten nothing*! This is on the principle of the cabbage-butterfly, who leaves her eggs exactly where the young caterpillar can find plenty of food so soon as he is born. The locusts had left the vineyards and the cornfields for their sons and daughters, the *criquets*, to make a meal of so soon as they should be hatched. For here we are arrived at the cradles. The female locusts had laid their eggs an inch or so underground, and in from ten to twenty-five days' time, according to the heat and character of the soil, the *éclosion*—the hatching—would occur. And what were the exasperated proprietors to do meanwhile?

Nothing; or something quite close to it. You cannot dig with anything bigger than a pointed stick in a cornfield, and the little clusters of eggs, at varying depths, are not easily found and brought to the surface in that light, sandy soil. Nor can you, even if you tried (which many proprietors courageously do), pursue your task over many thousand acres of ground. But you can be steadily preparing for the *éclosion* and for a wholesale massacre of the *criquets* before they grow up to be *sauterelles*—that is, winged locusts. And prepare accordingly the exasperated proprietors do.

So, at last, the *éclosion* took place, and the cornfields became the cradle of a new race—the *criquets*. Now began a battle, grim and savage, of exasperated proprietors and their

helpers against sheer multitudes of foes that fight not, but spend their time *eating*. These *criquets* have the most voracious appetites, young and healthy. And they have to grow to the size of one's little finger in a few days—an expansion which itself must represent a vast consumption of food; so they set to work with a will, and spared nothing. For many days they were still unable to fly, but could only *crawl*; and this they did, in great hordes, with relentless persistency, taking, as men aver, from their earliest infancy the road which their parents had already travelled, seeking the desert and the south, to winter there, even as their fathers and their mothers came up aiming for the seaside and salt-water bathing during the hot summer months (as so many other fathers and mothers do).

These wretched parents will even, perhaps, have tried a trip out to sea—no doubt with a disastrous result; for though some locusts, taking the Narrows, have reached Gibraltar, and others are even said to have arrived, across the full breadth of the Mediterranean, in France, yet as a rule they have to descend towards evening in the beautifully blue and clear waters of the sea, which, nevertheless, are wet, and put an end to their existence by asphyxia. Such a flight have I passed through, many miles from shore: they lay, covering the water absolutely from view, over an area of several acres; a patch of yellow and grey upon the blue of the sea—a small enough patch in comparison with the vast surface around us, but we were a quarter of an hour sailing through it. What aged locust, leader of the herd, was responsible for that mad trip and for the death of himself and his countless followers? And I wonder if, like the comrades of the Ancient Mariner, they turned their eyes upon him in death and cursed him as they passed?

But to return to the *criquets*. The youngsters, having cleared off all the food in the vicinity of their birthplace, set out to travel—towards the south, as it is believed. They grew very fast, they gorged themselves with food; but they were also sufficiently active. And need enough they had of all their powers, whether of rapid growth or of rapidity of movement, for every man's hand was against them. Exasperated proprietors, regiments of soldiers, Kabyle clansmen from the mountains, Arabs from their campments, Riffians, Moors, Jews, Turks, infidels and heretics, man and woman, house-dog, village-dog, cur, and child, set upon them to destroy them. Great trenches, miles in length, were cut in

front of their line of march for them to fall into, and the seething masses in these pits were destroyed with lime, or by other wholesale methods. Where the ground was level and open, iron rollers passed up and down in the midst of the swarm; cypriots were constructed to check them; miles of zinc, of wood, or canvas stretched vertically, which they could not pass over.

And the same thing was going on, all over the country. It was not uncommon to read, in the local papers, statements such as the following:

'Fifteen hundred men are employed in the *chantiers* at Polnik in combating yesterday's *éclosion* there. The work of destruction is progressing rapidly. If the Government would send two more regiments of soldiers, the work would be completed in time to allow of the *éclosion* at Bab-el-Noun being taken thoroughly in hand, so soon as it shall occur. The whole district will then be freed from the invasion.'

Or again:

'The Prefect has gone to bed for a week; he is quite worn out. The situation is desperate. Our brave colonists and the natives, however, maintain the fight courageously.'.

'M. K. de H——, the learned *savant* and entomologist, having gone out to make a study of an advancing swarm of Acridians, was set upon by them and eaten. The population is *consternée*.'

But this last paragraph turned out to be a *canard*, a most unblushing lie, for M. K. de H—— was at home, all right, in his own house, 'aussi riant, aussi rose, aussi potelé que jamais.' But one of the local papers, thinking that he had no right to be at home in his own house, comfortably, when he had been expressly sent by Government to study the Locust Question, suddenly launched that thunderbolt at him out of a clear sky.

So, with the whole population against them, destroying them as quickly as possible, the luckless *criquets* ate as hard as they could, crawled as fast as they could, grew as fast as they could, until the survivors of them, having arrived at the *sauterelle* age, took to themselves wings and departed in all haste. In the meantime, as every man's hand had been against them from the outset, it may seem strange that they were not utterly destroyed. To take the department of Algeria for instance: all the experience of the millions of *indigènes*, Arabs, Moors, Kabylians; all the wealth, energy, educated and intelligent direction of means to an end on the part of the French colonists; all the power of the

military forces of the territory—many thousands of drilled soldiers; all the exertions of the prefects and of the Governor-General, who went to Paris to interview the Home Government, and to raise a grant from the State of a million and a half of francs, to combat the scourge—has all this not availed to destroy the enemies, countless though they may have been?

Not at all. Let us leave particular locusts and their cradles and graves, and look at the question generally. Fighting their descent, at any particular point where they were about to settle, has been as unavailing (I have already said it) as though one were to fight a snowstorm. The locusts *must* settle—and settle they do—and lay their eggs, and thereafter depart again, or die a natural death. As for the *criquets*, it has been estimated from two sources independently, that the number of locusts which in one week, at the township of Palestro, halted, laid their eggs, and moved on again, was *sixty milliards*! These stupendous figures convey to us no precise meaning, yet may be taken as an approximation to the truth on the part of fairly expert men. Now, the locust lays on the average, *underground*, about ninety-six eggs, and from these eggs in some few days' time are evolved the *criquets*—to every egg a *criquet*. Courageously as the natives of the district may fight, and as they do fight, the task of exterminating such countless hordes is too gigantic to be undertaken with the prospect of entire success. Thus, at last, the *sauterelles* are evolved from the survivors of the *criquets*, and seek (and find) safety in winged flight. That they may find those wings as speedily as may be, and that they may betake themselves with all haste to their home, the desert, is no doubt the prayer of the very men who are exterminating them. It is to be presumed that these fugitives, in their flight from the land which their parents invaded only a few months earlier in such dense and well-ordered hordes, show signs of demoralisation and of rout, and though they may be as numerous as were their fathers, that they struggle back in small bands across the frontier, like Napoleon's great army of 1812 from Russia, with the fixed intention never to return to a land whence they have escaped with so much difficulty.

But the French colonists of the northern coast, from Tunis to Oran, do not believe this. They are too vain (I am afraid) to believe it, too proud of France and the improvements she has made since she occupied the land. They say: 'In old times, if the locusts came this way, they found nothing particular to eat—

nothing more than they could find in whatever other direction they had chosen to wing their flight. But now it is different: see, regard our great vineyards, our vast and fruitful farms and orchards, our groves of orange-trees, and our well-kept market-gardens. All these things we, in these last few years, have produced, and still are producing year by year. So it is becoming an hereditary instinct among the locusts to "go North to the *fruitful* land." The attempted extermination of the invaders will hardly check them; for still there will be survivors who have returned home (and who, perhaps, are not aware of the imminence of the peril they have escaped) who will spread abroad, or hand down to their offspring, the memory of the land flowing with milk and honey—cabbages and lettuce—that lies to the North. Thus year by year shall we encounter fresh invasions of a foe, whom we cannot pursue, and attack in turn beyond our frontiers, in the fastnesses of the Great Desert.'

This belief of theirs—that they have transformed the North of Africa into a land so pleasant to dwell in that it has not escaped the notice even of the locusts, is certainly Gallic, and is scarcely true. For, whatever the future may have in store, it is certain that one must go back a quarter of a century to find a parallel to the present invasion. In 1867 the rich plain of the Metidjah was ravaged by such incredible swarms of Acridians, that everything was eaten in the district—in the way of *plant*-life, we mean. As a consequence, followed famine. And with the famine came also a pestilence; for the streams, the wells, and watercourses, were choked with decaying masses of drowned locusts, till the pleasant brooks of the country were transformed into loathsome trenches of death-bringing pollution, and the land was smitten yet again with the most deadly plague of all.

It is to be hoped that this year the two disastrous consequences —famine and pestilence—may be avoided. Already, people talk confusedly about the one, though it should at least be not widespread. But as regards the other, the local authorities in most places have endeavoured to avoid it, by posting notices requiring house-occupiers and landowners generally to seal hermetically their wells and other sources of water-supply, so as to prevent the entrance of the Acridians. But it is, of course, impracticable to deal with the streams; and, unluckily, the locusts show a great predilection for them, and especially for such streams as the Isser or the Sobaon. In the first place, the vegetation growing along

their banks and in their valleys is richer and more succulent than elsewhere; also, these same valleys present natural and easy passes through a very mountainous country—and locusts like to keep to the lower, more sunny, more fruitful regions; and last, but not least, these *oueds* are torrents in the winter, though very shallow and very wide, but, in the summer, dwindle to a thin rivulet in the middle of broad sands—and it is precisely these tracts of dry, easily moved sand, that the female locusts frequent, in order to worm the holes wherein they deposit their eggs. Also, one may note that the sandy, cliff-like banks which bound the broad bed of the stream, are just the spots beloved by locusts for their late afternoon doze in the sunshine. Thus it happens, that many streams are polluted by the presence of the bodies of luckless *sauterelles* that have found a watery grave, whether their death has been due to drowning, or merely to natural causes. It is, however, to be hoped that the disasters of 1867 will have urged all people concerned, to such measures of precaution, that the water-supplies, upon which they depend for drinking purposes, will be kept pure and untainted.

In saying that, when the corpse of a *sauterelle* is found in the water, his decease may be imputed to drowning, *or* to natural causes, I incline to take the latter view, save where the water under discussion is the sea, or a tank, or a well. In these three cases, if a locust drops in, his death is practically inevitable. But from ordinary open water he can escape by swimming. He is very tenacious of life—a beast as hard to kill, I had almost been going to say, as an English stag-beetle. But I do not think I will go that length, remembering, as I do, my earliest years of entomological research, and my first attempt upon the life of one of those same stag-beetles: and how I put him in a tumbler brimful of water for a week, with a plate on top to 'keep his head under.' Nevertheless, I really believe a locust would run a stag-beetle fairly close in a trial of their respective capabilities of holding on to life under circumstances which, to say the best of them, are certainly not calculated to offer much inducement for such an exhibition of tenacity.

I have seen a locust pitch down, by mischance, in a pond whereof one edge (the nearer) was lined with cement, whilst the other was shelving earth. My friend the locust, though he swam with his mouth under water (he was very much 'down by the head'), with two or three powerful strokes of his hoppers oared

himself to the concrete; but he could not climb it. Whereupon he turned himself about, with his two great eyes just above water, but rather more goggly than usual, and, catching sight of the farther shore, some few yards distant, set manfully out to kick himself across. He arrived safely, and, crawling out, halted with the greatest unconcern beneath the splashing of a pretty little Moorish fountain. I watched him taking his shower-bath for a quarter of an hour, but as he did not seem inclined to move, I went myself, and left him. It is the custom of the dwellers in those parts to go and stand under a shower-bath, after taking a swim in the sea, and perhaps, being an observant locust, he had noticed that fact for himself, and desired to assimilate himself to the manner of the country. Anyhow, it cannot be denied that the average locust is a wary, well-educated, intelligent beast, endued, moreover, with a sort of low and malicious cunning, which prompts him to do all the mischief he can. If there is one particular cabbage in a little garden which the proprietor is really proud of, that cabbage the locusts will certainly attack. And if a well *should* by any mischance be left uncovered, I have noticed that they will go and fall into it in multitudes, merely (for I can imagine no other reason for such open suicide) that their dead bodies may poison the drinking-supply of the owner of the well.

These wanton acts will the average locust perform, whether he be a yellow pilgrim or a grey one, or as dusky as a Moor. There is only one member of the family for whom I do not feel an aversion (bred entirely by their malice and unholy cunning), and that is the garden-locust, a big, good-humoured, lazy, overgrown specimen as big as the middle finger of my hand, who is not given to voyaging overmuch, and for whom I have imbibed a sort of good-natured contempt.

CHAMPAGNE.

'O THOU invisible Spirit of wine, if thou hast no name to be known by, let us call thee Devil!' This melancholy sentiment was, as everybody knows, uttered by one Michael Cassio after his drinking bout, and probably a good many other people have said much the same thing upon other next mornings. In these days, when every phrase of Shakespeare is treated as though it were part of a State paper, it becomes interesting to inquire what the wine could have been that had such a potent effect. Speaking of Desdemona, Iago says that 'the wine she drinks is made of grapes,' and if this applies to Cassio's 'potations pottle deep' the range of inquiry is limited. Our ancestors loved full-bodied port and fiery sherry, but it cannot be said that these wines are only made of grapes. Of claret a man may imbibe bottle after bottle, and still, according to the old farmer, 'get no forrarder.' On the whole the probability is that Shakespeare, if indeed he thought anything about the matter, must have had in his mind the product of the vineyards of the Cyprus Commandery, which is undoubtedly one of the strongest natural wines of Europe. Of course the most appropriate drink of all would have been that champagne which, according to Curran, 'gives a runaway rap at a man's head.' But this notion must be dismissed at once, for the very sufficient reason that, in Shakespeare's time, champagne had not been heard of. Its consumption has now become so general, and it is to such a large extent elbowing out port and sherry, that we are apt to forget that the manufacture of sparkling wine is really quite a modern invention. It is true that Virgil says that

> Ille impiger hausit
> Spumantem pateram;

but it is probable either that the mention of the 'foaming' bowl was merely due to poetic licence, or that the foam was the result of incomplete fermentation. It is perfectly clear that even a couple of hundred years ago effervescing drinks were almost unknown. According to Fuller, a happy accident once revealed to Dr. Newell, Dean of St. Paul's and Master of Westminster School in Queen Mary's reign, the charms of bottled beer. The Dean was a famous

angler, and having stored his luncheon in a safe place on the river bank, 'found, when he looked for it, no bottle, but a gun—such the sound at the opening thereof—and this' (adds Fuller) 'is believed (casualty is mother of more invention than industry) the origin of bottled ale in England.' But there was nobody to apply the very reverend divine's discovery to the juice of the grape till at least a hundred and fifty years later.

It was not till the beginning of the eighteenth century that sparkling champagne became an article of commerce; but it acquired popularity with great rapidity, and its strength-giving properties were so highly esteemed that a horse, which was backed for fabulous sums to go from Versailles to the Hôtel des Invalides within an hour, was fed exclusively on champagne and biscuits for some days before the event. George the Second of England and Frederick the Great of Prussia both contributed to bring it into fashion, and the poet Marmontel celebrated its charms in bacchanalian lines. Arthur Young, the traveller, recommended it as a certain cure for the gout, but unfortunately his opinion is scarcely shared by the faculty nowadays. Talleyrand called it the 'vin civilisateur par excellence,' but it was only towards the end of last century that the 'vin mousseux' became at all generally known in England. According to Lockhart, it was Sir Walter Scott's favourite drink; and Byron celebrates

> Champagne with foaming whirls
> As white as Cleopatra's pearls.

But it is within the last twenty or thirty years that the consumption of sparkling champagne in this country has increased by 'leaps and bounds,' and it is scarcely likely that the extra duty of fivepence a bottle, which Mr. Goschen has imposed upon the dearer kinds, will have any marked effect in checking importation. It is true that a good deal of wine masquerades under that name without having any right to it. As for the so-called champagne of Neuchatel, we might as well talk of the Burton beer of Dublin, or the Devonshire cider of Norfolk. The Hungarians, too, grow their own 'champagne;' and at Budapest I once heard it offered to a celebrated French *littérateur* with a request for his opinion on it. He was anxious to be polite to our host, and answered diplomatically: 'Monsieur, je n'ai jamais goûté de *pareil* vin dans la France,' which really sounded quite like a compliment. But, as a matter of fact, no other district has ever successfully rivalled the vine-

yards on the low hills through which the Marne flows placidly; and the visitor to Reims has an opportunity of seeing the entire process of the manufacture at its headquarters.

Despite its Roman antiquities, its ancient cathedral, its weather-beaten fortifications, and its quaint architecture, Reims has the air of a bustling manufacturing town rather than of a solemn and sleepy episcopal city. It has its historical traditions in plenty, from the days when St. Louis of France was crowned there to that time of humiliation, when it was occupied by the Crown Prince and his Germans in the campaign of 1870–71. But its main interest has always centred in its wines. There is still in the cathedral a bas-relief representing St. Remy, its pious founder, making the sign of the Cross over an empty cask which, according to the story, was forthwith filled with choice liquor; and the excellence of its wines is reputed to have led to its selection, as early as the twelfth century, as a place for holding ecclesiastical councils, with the pope at their head. 'Bibere papaliter,' indeed, seems to have been the old equivalent for 'as drunk as a lord,' though it is to be hoped that both phrases were simply malicious, and do not represent the real repute of either pope or peer.

Over and over again, in the Middle Ages, Reims was besieged and sacked by different armies, and it is not impossible that the loot to be gained in the way of wine had something to do with its being selected for attack. In the sixteenth century the vineyards seem to have been terribly ravaged by some predecessor of the modern phylloxera, and the inhabitants made formal complaints to the Chapter, setting forth that the 'bruches' or 'éruches' had for many years destroyed the grapes, and begging that these 'animals or insects' might be warned, and that the Church might force them to retire from the territory. Accordingly due notice was given to 'the said animals or insects' to retire from the vines within six days, and nevermore to cause any damage in the diocese of Troyes, and it was expressly stated that if after such six days they should not have fully obeyed such commands, anathema or malediction should be pronounced against them.

Whether this priestly ban was as effectual as modern chemicals we are not informed, but it was probably cheaper.

At the present time there are scarcely any vineyards within five miles of Reims, but in the Middle Ages it seems to have been surrounded by what were considered the best growths in the neighbourhood, and though Epernay is now in the heart of the wine-

producing district, and Reims is only on its outskirts, the latter is the chief centre of the wine trade.

The city is honeycombed with cellars. There must be at least a score of manufacturers of champagne within its walls, and each of them conducts the chief part of his business underground. Among the larger establishments are those of Clicquot, Roederer, Heidsieck, Pommery, and Irroy, whilst Moet and Chandon, Pol Roger, and Perrier Jouet have their headquarters at Epernay.

Other famous firms, like those of Giesler and the Duc de Montebello, are at Ay or Avize, and besides those enumerated, there are various brands of champagne which enjoy popularity. As to their comparative merits I have nothing to say, nor have I made particular investigations as to the special mode of manufacture adopted by different firms. But I have taken one of the largest, if not the largest of all, as a sample; and as the result of my visit I have gleaned some particulars of the various processes which the wine goes through in its successive stages between the vineyard and the consumers.

The establishment of Messrs. X. occupies a commanding position on the one hill that rises from the flat plain by which Reims is surrounded. It is an enormous place. You enter an immense hall, which cannot be far short of two hundred feet in length, and the temperature of which is carefully regulated by various devices so as to keep it uniform. Most conspicuous is its gigantic tun, capable of holding 120 hogsheads of wine, and round this are some thousands of casks, tier above tier, containing the wine as it comes from the vineyard. Messrs. X. are themselves large vine-growers, but they are unable to produce sufficient grapes for their own manufacture, and they have buyers who scour the country during the vintage in order to obtain the choicest fruit. Like the other principal makers, they have their own wine-presses in the neighbourhood of the vineyards; and the greatest care has to be exercised in order, on the one hand, that no grapes which are small and sour, and on the other, none which are over-ripe and rotten, shall enter the press. It is really to a large extent the care exercised in this particular that makes the main difference between good champagne and bad. The accidental entry of a few tainted or sour grapes may spoil a large batch of must, and the prime cost of the selected grapes used by the best manufacturers is often more than twice that of those employed for making cheap champagne.

It of course varies enormously in different years, the highest

prices recorded being those of 1880, when the produce of particular vineyards fetched over 30 francs a gallon, or at the rate of about 4*s*. a bottle for what may be called raw material. After being pressed out, the grape-juice is allowed to run into large tanks, where it deposits its lees in the course of a day or two. It is then drawn off into new casks, in which it remains from the time of the vintage till about Christmas, when it is brought to the hall above referred to, and begins the process of fermentation. After this is completed, it is ready for mixing. The composition of the blend differs with various manufacturers. As a rule, the juice of white grapes is mixed with that of black in a proportion of one to three, and some firms have a special liking for combining the growths of particular vineyards with each other. This point being settled, the contents of the cask are poured into a colossal vat in which the blending takes place, and the wine is afterwards again placed in barrels in order to undergo the process of fining. All these stages occupy six or seven months, and it is ordinarily not till May that the bottling begins.

The quality of the bottles is an important matter. Unless their strength is very considerable there is sure to be terrible waste by breakage. Their price is a sensible item in the manufacturer's budget, and, curiously enough, it is found that champagne bottles cannot be used a second time, as the pressure to which they are subjected seems, in some unexplained fashion, to strain the glass so as to make it unsafe for future use. Indeed, it is stated that a thrifty manufacturer who once made the experiment of putting new wine in old bottles, to the number of 3,000, speedily found his cellars filled with broken glass and flooded with wine, less than a score of bottles out of the whole remaining intact. Sometimes a solution of cane-sugar is added before the wine is bottled, but this depends on the character of the particular vintage. The grape-juice of 1874, for example, was naturally, in point of sweetness, about equivalent to that of an average year plus three per cent. of sugar, and in that case, and indeed whenever the grapes are not distinctly deficient in saccharine constituents, and therefore in effervescence, no sugar would be added until a later stage. After being bottled, the wine is at once corked, the corks are secured with an ingenious contrivance which dispenses with wires, and the bottles are usually kept in the warehouses above ground, at a temperature warm enough to encourage effervescence, unless indeed the wine contains sufficient carbonic

acid gas to make it possible to dispense with this stage. Then they are sent down to the cellars, are stacked in a horizontal position, and are left to mature for a period varying from eight or ten months to three or even four years. The loss from breakage, though much less than it used to be, is still very serious. The average proportion of burst bottles is about seven per cent., but in particular years, and in particular cellars, it is sometimes as little as two or three per cent., while on the other hand there is occasionally, for no obvious reason, a regular epidemic of breakage, resulting in the almost entire destruction of bin after bin of wine. When the champagne is considered ripe for the market the bottles are placed in specially constructed racks, with their necks inclining obliquely downwards, so that the sediment may attach itself to the cork. With the object of dislodging the deposit from the glass to which it has clung, each bottle is at this stage turned daily (with a slight shake) to the extent of one-eighth of its circumference, and though this work is done with extraordinary quickness, practice makes the manipulation so accurate that every bottle completes the circle in exactly eight days; in other words, it is just that time before the top side of the bottle becomes uppermost again. This operation is continued for six or eight weeks, at the end of which time all the sediment has, as a rule, descended into the neck of the bottle, leaving the bulk of the wine clear and bright.

When this treatment does not prove effectual, the bottle is placed in a shaking machine (*électriseur*), and is returned to the racks to settle.

The next operation is very important. The cork is unfastened, and is discharged with a loud report, carrying with it the deposit which has accumulated. It is essential, on the one hand, that all the sediment should be driven out, and on the other, that none of the clear wine should be lost, and it is extraordinary to see the rapidity and accuracy with which this is effected. Then the liqueur has to be added. It consists exclusively of very old and rich wine which has been highly sweetened with pure cane-sugar. It is true that the taste for *vin brut*—i.e. wine without any liqueur at all—has been steadily increasing, especially in this country, but the quantity of such wine at present exported bears only a small proportion to the whole. Russia likes very sweet champagne, containing no less than 20 per cent. of liqueur. For England the proportion ordinarily ranges from 1 to 4 per cent. For America it

is 7 or 8 per cent., and for Germany it is rarely under 10 per cent. The annual production of Messrs. X. is about two million bottles, of which 800,000 come to England, between 600,000 and 700,000 are sent to the United States and the South American Republic, while the rest is mostly distributed between France and Germany. Some notion of the extent of the cellars of this one firm may be gathered from the fact that they occupy over five miles of tunneling in the chalk, and contained, last September, about 170,000 dozen of champagne in bottles, to say nothing of the wine stored in many thousands of casks. Some of the cellarage is said to have been excavated by the Romans, but most of it is of quite recent date, and the tunnels, averaging about 200 yards in length, are cut through the chalk, tier below tier, to a depth which has to be reached by the descent of 116 stairs. It is all-important to maintain an equable temperature, and Messrs. X. boast that this has been so completely secured that in their cellars it only varies two or three degrees throughout the year. Here and there, where the shafts admit daylight, the walls are ornamented by some bas-reliefs, some of which, by Navlet of Chalons, a local sculptor of repute, are of considerable merit. The total exportation of champagne from the Reims and Epernay districts amounts to something like 25,000,000 bottles annually.

The last really first-rate vintages have been those of 1874 and 1880, but the wine of 1884 has matured with unusual rapidity, and bids fair to be very nearly, if not quite, as good as that of 1880. Those of 1886 and 1887 were, on the whole, decidedly above the average, but in the latter year there was much mildew; and some manufacturers who were not careful to exclude the product of diseased vines find that their 1887's are now undrinkable. Of the yield of 1888 it is impossible to say anything favourable. The cold and wet summer kept the grapes back, and the frosts in the early part of the autumn were fatal to the crop, which produced nothing but sour wine. However, it is satisfactory to know that the various manufacturers have enormous stocks of good wine in hand; and those who agree with the learned traveller of the last century, already quoted as regarding champagne as the best specific for the gout, are not likely to have to cut themselves off from their favourite medicine on account of any failure of supply.

LADY KILLARNEY'S HUSBAND.

It was a fine afternoon in the beginning of July when Mr. Thomas Sidcup, strolling along Piccadilly, saw coming towards him, a short way off, his old friend and crony, Lord Killarney. The earl's clothes hung upon him loosely; his hat was placed rather far back on his head; he had a dejected and neglected air, as if he cared little now what happened to him.

'Hullo, Killarney! you don't seem particularly bright to-day,' exclaimed Tom, as he shook hands with his friend.

'Yes—eh? No. Well; I dare say not,' responded the earl, twisting his long grey moustache as he spoke.

'Anything happened?'

'Yes; something has happened,' said his lordship, with a sickly smile.

'Somebody threatening to make you a bankrupt?'

'Not exactly. They know it would be of no use. Any little rent that comes in goes into the pockets of the lawyers and the mortgagees.'

'What is it, then?'

'I'm going to be married.'

Tom did not know whether congratulations or condolences would be more suitable, so he merely exclaimed—

'You don't say so!'

'Yes. You see I have racing debts as well, and they *had* to be met. There was no way out of it.'

'The lady has money, I suppose?'

'Oh, yes. Plenty. Mrs. Poole is a widow. Her husband's firm was Jacobs and Poole, the bankers. She has a fine place in Yorkshire, and a house in town.'

'Then you're in luck, old fellow, and I congratulate you,' said Thomas Sidcup, heartily. 'You'll find you'll shake down together after a bit. Half the year you will do the magnate down in Yorkshire; and we shall have some capital shooting. Then for the season you will be in London. What more can you desire?'

The earl was not unwilling to be encouraged in his desperate enterprise; yet a foreboding filled his heart, as, bidding his friend

good day, he walked away, meditating on the face and form, the carriage and deportment, of Mrs. Joseph Poole.

. . . . . .

The wedding took place before the end of the season, and it was not until March that the earl and his countess came back to town. One day in April Sidcup met him in the Haymarket.

'How well you are looking!' was Tom's greeting.

'Well? Yes. I believe I'm getting stout, if you call that looking well.'

'Anything wrong, then?'

'Everything's wrong, Tom; I give you my word I'm the most miserable beggar on earth. I wish I were that crossing-sweeper. I wish I were dead!'

'Don't, Killarney. Don't give in like that,' said his friend in a soothing tone.

'Her ladyship's out to-night, going to a big missionary meeting,' said the peer, as a sudden idea occurred to him. 'Come and dine with me, and I'll tell you all about it. She is going to stay with some of her friends—won't be back till to-morrow.'

Tom accepted the invitation, and at half-past seven that evening he entered Lady Killarney's house in Park Lane. The dining-room, the dinner, the host, and the servants, were alike solemn and dreary. Killarney, however, brightened up under the influence of a few glasses of old port, and when the servants had retired he began to relate his trials and grievances.

'The fact is, old man,' said he, 'I can't call my soul my own. You know I've no money. She holds the reins, and gives me a sovereign now and again, as if I were a schoolboy.'

'Good gracious!'

'I would have asked you to dine at the club instead of in this mausoleum of a place, but I haven't been able to pay my subscription. She has got to be very religious of late, and fills the house with Low Church parsons and Dissenting ministers, and they go on in a way that's enough to drive a fellow mad. As for Sundays, they are too horrible to speak of. No dinner—only cold beef and tea, upon my sacred word of honour. No smoking allowed indoors—oh, it doesn't matter for to-night. The smell will be gone by to-morrow.'

'Lady Killarney keeps a very good table,' said Sidcup, anxious to mention one alleviating circumstance.

'Ugh! Eating and drinking isn't everything. And within

the last few weeks her ladyship has taken to—you won't guess?—teetotalism! Isn't it awful?'

A look of pain and disgust overspread the earl's still handsome face, and was reflected in that of his friend.

'She gives away tracts, addresses meetings, and actually threatens to send all the wine in the house to a hospital, or pour it into the sink!'

'She must be mad,' muttered Tom.

'And that fellow,' continued the earl, nodding his head towards the butler's pantry, 'has private directions not to do what I tell him, if it is against his mistress's orders.'

'Monstrous! I wouldn't stand it, Killarney. I'd bolt!'

'Bolt? Without a ten-pound note in the world? No; she has me tight enough;' and the unhappy earl groaned aloud.

At that moment the dining-room door was thrown wide open, and a majestic figure, clothed in silk and fur, made its appearance.

'Algernon!'

The fumes of the cigars almost choked her ladyship's utterance.

'This is disgraceful,' said Lady Killarney, as she slowly advanced to the table. 'Turning my dining-room, the dining-room of a Christian woman, into a tap-room!'

'Pooh, my dear,' said the nominal head of the establishment, determining to brave it out before his friend, 'it's only a cigar. We wouldn't have smoked if I had known you would be home to-night. Let me introduce to you my old friend Sidcup—Mr. Sidcup, Lady Killarney.'

'I shall speak with you to-morrow, Algernon. Good evening, sir;' and Lady Killarney swept out of the room, ignoring altogether the attempted introduction, and addressing her last words to a vacant spot about six inches above Mr. Sidcup's head.

Honest Tom sat down with a shudder, and hardly dared to glance at the earl for very pity. For some time he sat silent. Suddenly he started up, struck the table with his fist, upsetting as he did so his glass of claret, and seized his friend's hand.

'Killarney,' he said solemnly, 'I'll be your deliverer! I pledge myself to it. You shall be set free, and be your own man once more!'

The earl shook his head.

'I've no doubt you'll do your best; but—you don't know Lady Killarney.'

'Never mind. *I'll do it*, on condition that for the next two months you follow all my directions. You promise that? Very good. In less than a fortnight you and I set out for Killarney.'

. . . . . .

A bright May morning makes even the Strand look cheerful; and on this particular forenoon that thoroughfare was even more crowded than usual; for the May meetings were in full swing. The entrance to Exeter Hall was blocked by a large crowd of well-dressed people—country parsons and their wives and daughters, wealthy retired tradesmen, rich old ladies, and a sprinkling of good young men. It was the field-day of the United Kingdom Temperance Alliance; and the announcement that, in addition to a colonial bishop, the meeting would be addressed by the Countess of Killarney, had attracted a great assemblage.

At the door of the hall were three or four young men who were busily engaged in distributing leaflets among the people who entered the building; and the good folk not only accepted the little papers (as the frequenters of Exeter Hall invariably do on such occasions), but carried them inside, that they might look them over when comfortably seated. Among the arrivals was the Countess of Killarney. She, too, received a leaflet; she, too, carried it with her into the hall.

The cheers that greeted the countess had hardly died away, when the illustrious convert to the temperance cause, taking her seat on the platform beside the colonial bishop, glanced at the tastefully got-up circular in her hand. It was not a new tract, nor a notice of a sermon, nor an advertisement of a charitable society. It was headed with the Killarney arms, and ran thus:

FINEST WHISKY IN THE WORLD!!!

LORD KILLARNEY AND CO.

ARE THE SOLE DISTILLERS AND PROPRIETORS OF

THE KILLARNEY WHISKY.

Distilled from the finest Barley, and the pure Waters of the far-famed Lakes of Killarney. It is Wholesome, Invigorating, Appetising.

On the opposite side was a prospectus of the company; the chairman of the board of directors being the Right Honourable the Earl of Killarney, C.B., and the vice-chairman, Thomas Sidcup, Esq.

The large and highly respectable audience soon became aware that something was in the wind. The pale-green-tinted circulars could be seen passing from hand to hand in the crowded hall, accompanied by the lifting of eyebrows, the shaking of heads, the wagging of beards, in one corner a suppressed groan, in another an audible titter. For Lady Killarney to address the meeting under these circumstances was plainly impossible; she left the hall in a state of speechless indignation, while the colonial bishop hinted in guarded terms at 'the libellous insult which had been offered to an honoured and hitherto spotless name.' It was the first time the name of Killarney had ever been thus spoken of by the clergy; but the bishop was evidently thinking of the title as belonging to the lady rather than to her husband.

Lady Killarney reached Park Lane in a state of suppressed fury, and despatched telegrams in all directions for her lord and master. Receiving no answer to these messages, she sallied forth next morning for a certain Lane in the Ward of Cheap, where the London office of Lord Killarney & Co. was situated, that she might confer with Mr. Thomas Sidcup, whom she rightly deemed to be the prime mover in this foul conspiracy.

She was received with all imaginable politeness, even with deference. She was not, of course, aware that her erring spouse was stationed in a large closet opening off Mr. Sidcup's room, in which the Company washed its hands at the close of its day's labours.

Without deigning to utter a word in reply to Mr. Sidcup's greeting, the injured woman marched up to his table, placed the obnoxious circular on his desk, laid a manly forefinger on the paper, and looked the evildoer in the face. He merely smiled in return.

'What is the meaning of this, sir?' demanded the lady, in awe-inspiring tones.

'It means a little industrial enterprise, Lady Killarney; and I hope it will have the effect of affording work for some of your husband's tenants, and profit for himself.'

'Sir! Do you mean to tell me that this thing is *true*? That my husband has lent his name to a dirty trading company'—['Pretty well this, for the old bill-discounter's daughter,' thought Tom]—'is bad enough; but I cannot believe that the earl, *my husband*, is personally engaged in this unholy, this accursed

traffic. It cannot be. Mr. Sidcup, if that is your name, where *is* my husband?'

'In Dublin, I believe, madam, trying to find customers for our Peat Reek Brand, five years old, at two-and-nine—or else in Edinburgh (they drink a deal of good whisky there). At least, his lordship intended going north. I won't swear he has actually gone.'

'Mr. Sidcup, this must be stopped,' said her ladyship firmly.

'I am afraid I hardly understand. *What* must be stopped?'

'This thrice accursed——'

'Your ladyship will excuse me—James,' he said to a clerk, who was pottering about the room, 'leave those letter-books alone, retire, and close the door behind you. We must be careful, Lady Killarney. The use of—ahem!—profane language is *strictly* forbidden in the office; and *the example*, your ladyship understands, *the example* is most contagious.'

'Sir!'

Even the hardened Thomas Sidcup quailed for a moment beneath that eye. For the first time he fairly realised the position of his friend, Lord Killarney.

'I said that *accursed* traffic, sir. A traffic which ruins men, body and soul.' (This time Mr. Sidcup let the word pass without remark.) 'And I say it must be stopped. The Company must be dissolved.'

'What! dissolve Lord Killarney & Company! The most flourishing concern in the market—shares rising every day—a fortune to be made in it—never!'

'If Lord Killarney had wanted money he could have come to *me* for it,' said the lady loftily.

'Perhaps he didn't like to trouble your ladyship; and, at any rate, that resource was denied to me,' said old Tom, with his sweetest smile.

'What do you want for your shares?' asked the countess, abruptly.

'Do you mean them all?'

'Every one.'

'Forty thousand pounds,' said Tom promptly.

'Forty thousand fiddlesticks!'

'Pardon me, Lady Killarney, I did not offer the shares to you. The company is a genuine, working concern, brewing its own whisky on your husband's estates in Ireland.' (He did not think

it worth while to mention that the 'distilleries' consisted of three stills, two of them, until lately, illicit, the third barely finding employment for one man and a boy.) 'We don't interfere with anybody; and we——'

'Didn't you interfere with my meeting, yesterday?' asked the countess.

'I! How? What meeting? I'm afraid I hardly comprehend,' said Mr. Sidcup.

'Well; never mind. But forty thousand pounds is out of the question. Seven thousand would be too much.'

'Indeed, madam, you are mistaken,' said Tom, earnestly.

'I will not submit to such robbery. I will consult my solicitor,' said Lady Killarney, rising and shaking out her ample skirts as she spoke.

'Of course you can do that, Lady Killarney. I think you will find, however, that even since the passing of the Married Women's Property Act, a husband is entitled to hold shares apart from his wife, exactly as if he were unmarried,' said Tom, with perfect gravity.

'Then, sir, it is a most infamous law, and it ought to be altered at once.'

Tom only bowed.

'I cannot endure that this should go on,' said the countess after a pause. 'The scandal of the inconsistency would be too notorious. No; my work would be spoiled. It would be said—— Oh, good heavens! the world would say that my horses and carriages—the very dress on my back, were paid for out of the proceeds of this ac——, this abominable trade, all the time that I was denouncing it!'

'I confess that people might, and probably would, put some such construction upon the facts.'

'That would be absolutely intolerable!'

Tom shook his head in melancholy fashion.

'Can't you suggest something?' asked the countess, after another pause.

'Well; if I might give a hint, I should say—come to terms with Lord Killarney. He is our largest shareholder—three thousand ten-pound shares.'

'How much paid up on them?'

'Admirable woman!' murmured Tom Sidcup to himself. Then aloud: 'All issued as fully paid up—the price of the land,

the name (great thing that), the distilleries, the good-will, and so on. I'll show you the deeds in a moment.'

Lady Killarney inspected the deeds with the greatest care, and she was quite enough of a lawyer to know what they meant. They showed that in consideration of a sum of five thousand pounds in cash, and thirty thousand pounds in three thousand shares of ten pounds each, he the said grantor did thereby grant, assign, and convey, all that, &c. Lady Killarney had a vague feeling that she was being swindled; but how she could not clearly see.

'If your ladyship would take my advice,' said Tom, when the deeds had been duly perused, 'I would not pay all that money down. Make an agreement to pay your husband an annuity—say fifteen hundred a year—in lieu of the money for the shares. Then it will be really taking money out of one pocket and putting it into the other.'

Lady Killarney could not quite see things in that light; but she thought the idea of an annuity a decidedly good one. The other shareholders, Tom thought, could be bought up privately, one by one, after she had possessed herself of Lord Killarney's interest in the undertaking.

'And remember, Lady Killarney, you must have it a condition of the bond upon which the annuity will be secured, that at no time, and under no circumstances, must your husband take part in the manufacture or sale of spirituous or malt liquors, or permit his name to be used by any person or any company manufacturing or vending them, else the bond is to become void and the annuity is to cease.'

Lady Killarney was reassured by this disinterested advice; and after she and Mr. Sidcup had settled one or two other details of the scheme, she left the office in a comparatively calm frame of mind.

'Tom,' said the earl, emerging from the closet, 'you have saved me!'

After a few more interviews between Lady Killarney and Sidcup—who actually began to be a bit of a favourite with her ladyship before the end of the negotiations—the matter was settled; the annuity deed, securing to the earl twelve hundred a year for life, was duly signed, sealed, and delivered, and 'Lord Killarney & Co., Limited,' ceased to exist.

A week after his emancipation, the earl entertained his friend at Richmond, and presented him with a gold cigar case 'in token

of the grateful friendship of Algernon Cyril, Earl of Killarney.' Curiously enough, that very evening a large parcel was delivered at Sidcup's chambers. It contained an enormous time-piece, bearing an inscription: 'From Rebecca Anne, Countess of Killarney, in acknowledgment of the disinterested kindness of her friend, Thomas Sidcup, Esq.' Tom promptly removed the inscription-bearing plate, and sent the thing to a pawnshop.

Mr. Sidcup had foreseen that the surest way of securing peace between the ill-matched pair was to render them independent of each other, and make no provision about separation. By degrees they learned to make allowances for each other's tastes; and Lord Killarney played the host for his wife's parsons and temperance orators, on the tacit understanding that for the autumn and winter months the house in Yorkshire would be kept up for his undisturbed occupation. The earl took his wife about to drawing-room meetings and 'conferences,' and even consented once or twice to preside at these gatherings; while she tolerated the smell of cigars, and never inquired at what hour his lordship got home from his club. Altogether, there are many couples in England who do not get on together nearly as well as Lady Killarney and her husband.

DICKENS AND DAUDET.

It would be folly to look for anything like a complete analogy between two writers one of whom was an Englishman, with all the peculiar strength and weakness which belong to the name, and the other a native of the South of France grafted on a Parisian stock, who is at this moment perhaps the most notable example of a phase of French literary thought the keynote of which is the hopeless acceptance of a state of society in which the moral sense has no place. If Dickens, fired with generous indignation, exaggerated in his own mind many of the evils which he thought it to be his mission to right, and conjured up unrealities to lash them with long-drawn sarcasm, yet the human nature to which he introduces us, however abnormal it may be in general character, is neither extravagant in its virtue nor its vice. There is plenty of meanness and crime, but there is a large measure of human kindness and a happy absence of the prevailing modern sin. The so-called School of Decadence, on the other hand, to which Daudet belongs betrays a strange and diseased imaginativeness which distorts 'contemporary manners' while its possessors believe it to be merely reflecting them. Such men and women as Daudet and his fellows paint might conceivably have peopled the Cities of the Plain, but the most abandoned Capitals of to-day can show nothing so uniformly immoral, nothing like the dead level of selfish and sordid vice which they offer for our delectation. Such a form of caricature as this, in which each individual may have his counterpart in the world around us, is the exact converse of the obvious exaggeration of individual traits in which Dickens indulged—a proceeding which possibly sins against the canons of art, but does not offend the moral code. Daudet, whose sensitiveness for his art leaves him little care for morals, hides away what might put us on the alert, and will persuade us, if he can, to accept as normal what is really an outrage against human nature. It has been said that he is content merely to go down to the Boulevard for his material and take what he finds there, but it is a poor compliment to the Boulevardiers to suppose that he does not select his subjects with some care. As a matter of fact, even the less thorough-going apostles of realism find themselves unable

to make much direct use of virtue, and Daudet is certainly no exception to the rule. His actual method of gathering his materials and putting them into form is no secret at all; no writer, indeed, has taken the public more wholly into his confidence. With pure invention, if we are to believe him, he has almost nothing to do. He replaces it, however, by constant observation of a minute kind, noting methodically, as an artist might make thumbnail sketches, not only traits of character, but even motions of the head, shrugs of the shoulder; the countless details, in a word, which go to the completion of an artistic picture. His business is to select and combine, to provide the motive force which shall set the passions in action. Jack, Moronval, Hirsch, Labassindre, Belisaire, Rivals, D'Argenton, Ida de Barancy—to take only one book—have all lived and loved and schemed and hated in real life; indeed, it is only when a perspicuous public insists on applying the key that our author is found, oddly enough, to have been, for once in a way, relying on his native imagination. The connection of Gambetta's name with the comic but contemptible hero of a well-known book was hardly avoidable in view of the close way in which the beginnings of the actual statesman tallied with those of the novelist's creation. A similar mistake was made by Dickens when he represented Harold Skimpole, who was universally recognised as being a most unfortunate travesty of Leigh Hunt, then bringing out his Reminiscences. Such coincidences do not escape notice, and matters are hardly mended when the writer points, as both those in question did, to the real dissimilarity of character as a proof of the groundlessness of the charge. Acute as were Dickens's powers of observation, this particular instance and the incomplete sketch of Landor are, not improbably, the sole examples of his reliance on actual models. Strikingly original and full of fancy, his personages are less lifelike than those of Daudet, and are clearly the product of a mind which was as much repelled as that of the French writer is attracted by debasing and passionate vice.

That there should be one single feature common to the work of those two men, so differently constituted, subject to such diverse influences, and living in surroundings so dissimilar, is a standing wonder. It is true that, generally speaking, the likeness lies rather in the materials than in the treatment, for whereas the first conception was everything with Dickens, the French writer works his characters out with great thoroughness, and impregnates them with an unwholesomeness which Dickens could not have

conveyed, if he would, to the most sordid of his villains; but it would be wrong to say that there are no instances of parallel treatment, and, as a matter of fact, the writers do approach each other sufficiently near at certain points to explain the existence of a more fundamental similarity than is implied in the mere selection of material. Probably the chief reason is to be found in the history of their early lives. Thrown, both of them, when little more than children, on their own resources, driven to earn a precarious livelihood, and to consort with the poor and out-at-elbows, they endured slights from which their self-respect was long in recovering, learnt by bitter experience what kind of life the poor lead, and, by a happier chance, how unselfishly helpful the members of that great class are to one another.

These early lessons have given the specific bent to all their work: that is practically Daudet's answer to the charge of plagiarism which has, not unreasonably, been brought against him. It is an excellent one up to a certain point, and it cannot be denied that, in a greater or less degree, the internal evidence of both authors' work bears out the justification. They had the common heritage of a sympathetic nature, a common aim—for we will credit Daudet with one—the levelling up of the lower classes.

Dickens worked to this end by specific indictments—by attacks on the workhouse system, which he holds up again and again to obloquy as the bugbear of the poor; by depicting the manners and customs of the debtors' prison, the unholy joys of the swaggering spendthrifts and the shrinking misery of their less robust fellow-prisoners. He paints the smug iniquities of the Court of Chancery in some hundreds of pages of sustained indignation. He sneers at the House of Commons, at the administration of justice, whether by Mr. Justice Stareleigh in his court or Mr. Nupkins in his dining-room. He carps at the cheap benevolence of foundation schools, 'Charitable Grinders,' or what not, which costs the giver nothing, makes a laughing-stock of the victim, and in the end turns him out a 'Biler.' He takes poor Miss Flite's madness to be undoubted when she proclaims her approval of the principles which govern the conferring of titles: 'I am afraid she believed what she said, for there were moments when she was very mad indeed.' The constituted authorities are to him what the red rag is to the bull. He never tires of contrasting the insolence of the rich with the courtesy of the poor. He vents his feelings in impossible scenes like that between Mr. Dombey and

Toodle, the engine-driver, on the platform at Paddington. The sight of a wisp of crape in Toodle's cap, a mute tribute to the memory of little Paul, moves the father to an Arctic chilliness of demeanour and speech, which finds an echo in the sympathetic Bagstock: 'Never educate that sort of people, sir. Damme, sir, it never does! It always fails!'

Daudet is not a whit behindhand in his general disapprobation of things that are. He devotes a volume with more than questionable taste to defamation of the Academy. From its 'dusty cupola' to its musty dictionary he covers it with ridicule. Its most honoured historian wastes his substance in ludicrous forgeries, and incorporates them in a book which is to mark a new era. The stupidity of the members is only equalled by the greed with which they touch their pay, the assumption with which they wear the braided coat, and the scandalous means to which they—or their wives—resort to secure election. The Chamber of Deputies is tried and found wanting in the person of Numa Roumestan, Minister of Public Instruction, with a private life which Daudet makes depraved to a degree not necessary for his purpose; who is devoid of all genuine conviction, except that the present moment is always paramount; is ready to throw political consistency to the winds; begins a letter accepting a post under the Empire, and, being shamed out of it by his wife, merely inserts a negative in the middle of a sounding phrase which he cannot find it in his heart to forego; traffics shamelessly in appointments to further his amours; and is borne away on a torrent of words to lavish promises which, when the excitement is over, he brushes aside. 'Do words mean anything?' asks his wife. That is entirely a question of latitude—the 'méridional' does not take them seriously. In 'Le Nabab' we are introduced to bubble companies who take corner lots, run up large bills for furniture and upholstery and forget to pay their clerks, and to doctors who make their patients temporarily sleek with arsenic pills. There is much bitter writing, which is not the less so that it certainly is not done with that sense of the necessity of getting a wrong made right which is so characteristic of Dickens; nor does it even strike one that Daudet is giving expression to his own individual convictions so much as to the views of the literary clique—Flaubert, Zola, the De Goncourts, Tourgueneff—to which he belonged. The cause of the poor is pleaded in his works rather by implication than in so many words. Sometimes they are virtuous in spite of tempta-

tion; more often they are vicious by reason of it. In either case the contrast between luxury and want, between vice which is accepted open-armed and vice which it needs an heroic effort to repel, is striking enough. If their portrayal should by chance do something towards modifying them, so much the better; but if that is the writer's real motive, what is his meaning when he says that it is merely the craving for reality which forces him to throw etiquette aside and display the passions as they are?

It was during the siege of Paris when he was attached to a battalion of working men that, as he tells us, he came to understand the poor, and to love the people in the vices which are the outcome of misery and ignorance. With a far greater faculty than Dickens could pretend to for painting gentlefolk—a great noble like the Duc de Mora, a queenly woman like Frederica of Illyria—he is at his best and at his kindliest when he is dealing with those of humbler station. He is struck, as Dickens was, by the sacrifices which they make to help one another. 'La vraie famille est chez les humbles,' he says. We have to go to a fireside like that of the Delobelles' to learn what self-renunciation is. Eighteen hours out of the twenty-four the mother and daughter sit at work that the object of their blind worship may wear the broadcloth which his dignity demands, and sup on some delicate dish when he returns at night from his exhausting avocations. 'Jack' is full of scenes which certainly atone in a large measure for the almost impossible villany on which the story turns. Nothing is better than the description of the joint household formed by Belisaire and Madame Weber with Jack. These two tender-hearted and simple people, when their comrade is lying in a state of fever which seems unending, make it a point of honour to beggar themselves rather than let him be taken to the hospital. Jack overhears them, and, ill as he is, insists on leaving them. Leaning on Belisaire's arm he reaches the Parvis Notre Dame, is examined by the doctor, and admitted. These scenes and those which follow at the bedside might easily be overwrought; but, as a matter of fact, they are told with a directness which compares favourably with Dickens's manner in kindred situations. No author could have been more thoroughly penetrated with his subject than was Daudet in writing this book. A record of cruelty, bitterness, and misery which are almost incredible, it falls far short, as he tells us, of the reality. He had known the original of Jack with an intimacy for which his own kindness of

heart was responsible. The pathos of the story had touched him as the man long before its possibilities were suggested to him as the artist. The hint once given, however, he never doubted for a moment that the central interest of his story would hold the public as it had held him. Hence the general simplicity and breadth of effect. The pitiful details of the later scenes are merged in the spectacle of Jack's filial piety warring down the natural revolt against consistent and thoughtless neglect, and it is not till at the very last a theatrical effect is introduced, which suggests the ringing down of the curtain, that we become conscious of the teller of the story apart from the story itself.

To Dickens's charming pictures of humble life it is hardly necessary to refer. He was never happier than when he was adding a fresh jewel to the crown of virtue with which he liked to think the brow of poverty was adorned: of their sympathy for each other he said, 'What the poor feel for the poor is little known except to themselves and God,' and for those above them in station he believed it to be equally real. Where but in his pages shall we find so uncomplaining and loving a loyalty as that of Joe Gargery for a forgetful Pip? Where such prudent counsel, such frank bearing, and active helpfulness as in Mrs. Bagnet? Where shall we look for an unselfishness to match that of the Boffins, who did not lose their virtues with their poverty; or a fine courtesy like that of Cap'en Cuttle, a true gentleman if ever there was one? Is there another household so warmly hospitable as that of the Peggottys, or fidelity as unswerving as that of Mark Tapley and Sam Weller? There is naturally another side to the picture, but we shall hardly find real, sordid, unrelieved, unforgivable wickedness—the type which the reader of Daudet is always meeting—till we look to the later works, when the lightness of touch was gone, and the source of inspiration was failing; to Riderhood, above all to Wegg. The latter is possibly more true to life than many of his humorous and sturdy miscreants of an earlier day—one would hardly look to meet a Squeers, a Fagin, or a Mantalini in ordinary life; but the wildest improbability is infinitely less jarring than this slight perversion of a reality which is in itself too mean for art.

There is a second bond between the two writers, to which Daudet might reasonably have referred in self-defence, and that is the evident appreciation of boyhood to which many admirable studies of children scattered through their pages bear witness.

The types are characteristically distinct, a result which naturally follows from the insight of the writers, for in boyhood the national traits are less modified by the idiosyncrasy of the individual than comes to be the case later. The cosmopolitan child is happily not common, and Daudet's boys are as unmistakably French in temperament as Dickens's are English. There is nothing in the boyhood to which we are accustomed quite so excruciatingly contemptible as the behaviour of the hopeful young Marquis de Boucoyran to 'le petit chose.' The traditions of English school life are sufficiently strong to restrain the meanest nature from venturing on a treachery which may be natural to it, but they do things differently in France. The boy in question, relying on his physical superiority, and the support of the class, insults the master—Daudet himself, for the incident occurs in his autobiography: the poor little usher, beside himself with rage, takes the law into his own hands, and wreaks his vengeance on the vile body of his enemy. The latter is subdued for the moment, but the next day takes the step which all the boys seem to accept as a natural one, and tells his father; the net result being that the usher is lectured *coram populo*—not only by the head master, but also by the indignant parent, who indulges in ignoble threats—and is summarily cashiered. The whole incident, which is obviously true, is an interesting commentary on the difference between English and French boys—a difference which is fostered and emphasised at every turn.

The odd thing is that the scene in 'David Copperfield,' where Steerforth displays his real nature in his cowardly attack on Mr. Mell is on all-fours with it. Mr. Creakle's feelings are no less outraged than were those of the French principal, his proceedings are very similar, and the results for poor Mr. Mell identical. Probably this incident is founded on an actual school experience, but the 'Shame, J. Steerforth!' of Traddles, who would have done well to die during his admirable youth, proves that the sense of honour in the English school could not be wholly stifled, even by the divinity of Steerforth.

Dickens's boys range from Paul Dombey to Charley Bates and the fat boy in 'Pickwick,' from the dreamer and visionary to the widest of wide-awake, and again to the votary of a somnolent repletion. So long as 'Dombey' is read at all, Paul will have his admirers and detractors, and so, for the matter of that, will little Nell. Poetically conceived, Nell, like Jo, seems, nevertheless,

made to tread the boards. The mission of the stage-child is to draw tears, and an audience is rarely careful to consider the quality of the pathos which moves it; but for the reader who approaches her in the less heated atmosphere of the closet, Nell is felt to be an over-coloured and unreal personage who walks the stage on emotional stilts. A born actor, Dickens had a keen appreciation of stage effects and moving situations which led him to do work which needs the gaslight to subdue its garishness. The death of a child is at all times an unnatural thing, and is too ready a way of harrowing the feelings to be lightly resorted to. Either it is painfully affecting or it is felt to be a device, and is resented; yet Dickens takes us from deathbed to deathbed, from Nell to Paul Dombey, and from Paul to Jo, and at all three the spirit of melodrama is present. The death of Jo is absolutely inexcusable, and the plot does not in the least demand it. Till the author was moved to make him sickly Jo had many good points, and deserved anything rather than to be cut off in the flower of his youth—say, to be apprenticed to Snagsby. As for little Paul, it is almost as difficult to acquit him of staginess, but so closely are one's recollections of him bound up with Toots's unforgettable confidences on the subject of waistcoats, and the amenities of Mrs. Pipchin's establishment, that a good deal can be forgiven. Even the precociousness of disease, however, cannot excuse all his flights, and children do not die enfeebled old dotards at five out of Mr. Gilbert's romantic verse.

In depicting the London *gamin* Dickens of course showed a master-hand, and the student of his manners and customs will find in Tom Scott, Quilp's attendant sprite, and the unsurpassable group at Fagin's, a fascinating book of reference. There is yet another finished study which stands out from a multitude of effective sketches; that of Pip—the leading figure, as he is the narrator, of a story which for quaint but wholly unaffected simplicity was never surpassed by its author. Through the haunting adventures in the marsh, and the sufferings at the hands of Mrs. Gargery and Uncle Pumblechook; through the days of his new-born passion for Estelle; and, above all, his relation with the grown man to whom he extends his moral protection, as Jenny Wren did to the old reprobate who called her daughter—through all this time till the journey to London, the narrative is one of sustained beauty.

Daudet has nothing which can stand with this or with David's

early reminiscences, good as much of his work is. 'Jack,' the man, has already been referred to: the boy is little less interesting, and is equally well drawn. His was a clinging and affectionate nature, whose sole object of love—his mother—was, even in childhood, dimly and at moments perceived to be unworthy. Jack's place is gradually usurped by the lover d'Argenton, but, for the time, all interest is centred in the brilliant sketch of the little Prince of Dahomey, into whose society Jack was thrown. Mâdou, for whom at an earlier day nothing in the Gymnase Moronval was too good, has, at the time we come across him, thanks to the deposition of his father from the throne, been degraded to the position of general help.

To a calmness under misfortune, which is essentially savage in character and is dependent on the possession of a charm, he unites an affectionateness of disposition which soon makes a bond between the two unfortunates. Their beds are side by side, and Mâdou regales Jack with stories in which the local colour is somewhat too strong for the nerves of the little Parisian. Mâdou makes up his mind to flight: he disappears, and when he is brought back his charm is gone. His heart is broken; the thin film of civilisation is shred away. As he lies on his death-bed all the years of his exile are wiped out, and he lives in spirit in his native country. Death was the only possible end for him, and it is treated with a reticence which disarms objection and invests it with a striking reality. Much that is better unread awaits the reader of 'Les Rois en Exil;' but among the good things which it contains must certainly be counted the sketch of the Comte Zara, in whom a devoted mother and loyal subject sees the future king. The son of a father whose sins are visited on his child, he is the victim of inherited weakness and accidental disfigurement, and his personality is not a decided one; but if the sketch is in monochrome it is by the hand of an artist, and the episode of the visit to the 'Fancy Bread' fair, where the tired and happy child is carried high by his tutor Méraut, is told with much grace.

Dickens's own personal feelings entered so deeply into the composition of 'David Copperfield'—it was his favourite child, and he does not mind confessing that it draws tears from him when he reads it—that it is natural to find there his best work. Daudet stands back from his canvas as he works, and views it in a spirit which is rather critical than emotional; but in spite of this one might have anticipated that the brother who, when little more than

a child himself, was father and mother to him at once—*ma mère Jacques*—would have inspired him to paint a picture which should be a masterpiece. If this is not actually the case, the portrait is nevertheless an excellent piece of work. A childhood of tears, to which his father's constant cries of 'Ane!' and 'Butor!' may have somewhat contributed, led to a boyhood too busy to allow so frequent a recourse to the handkerchief, but distinguished by no less real sensibility. 'Le petit chose,' after his dire experiences as a master, makes his way to Paris, where Jacques is employed as a secretary. While Jacques works, he spoils paper—much to the contentment of an admiring brother—and helps to make his scanty pay hopelessly inadequate. Jacques loves with fond humility: his brother sees and conquers. Jacques is called away: his brother runs into debt, deceives him, deserts the girl whose love he had attracted from him, and is only rescued when Jacques, throwing up his appointment, comes back to Paris to save him, to look one reproach, and to die. Fiction is inextricably mixed up with fact; but so much of the story as deals with the elder brother is practically historical. There are many happy touches in the life of the boy-schoolmaster himself, the father with thirty-five children, who was found by one of his fellows regaling his class with fairy stories during school hours; but enough has been said to show the existence of a faculty for reading and interpreting child-nature very similar to that of Dickens.

If laughter is akin to tears, so is humour to pity. It was so in the case of Dickens; and Daudet, without approaching him in a quality which we believe to be an Englishman's birthright, has a larger share than falls to many of his fellow-countrymen.

Without 'Pickwick' it is hardly likely that we should ever have had the trilogy of which Tartarin is the hero; but of likeness there is absolutely none. The prodigious Tartarin himself is the kindly exaggeration of a type, while Pickwick was, so to speak, a monster to whom the laws which govern human conduct are not applicable. A sublime and engaging innocence is common to both; but in Tartarin's case it is in a measure related to the form with which Mark Twain, himself a debtor to Dickens, has made us familiar. Pickwick is the more extraordinary creation of the two, because in spite of the extremely undignified spectacle which he at times presents, he never ceases to be a gentleman. Tartarin could make no such lapses with impunity. There is pathos in 'Pickwick'—not in the general scenery of the debtors' prison, which

seems misplaced in so joyous a book, but in the relations of the master and servant. Tartarin, too, is genuinely touching more than once, and never more so than in his strange wooing; but Daudet might have let us rest in the belief that he still lives. That moving spectacle of the discredited hero, never more heroic than in his fall, making his perilous way across the bridge in the teeth of half a gale, is needlessly harrowing to the feelings. At any rate the extravagance of the descent from Mont Blanc, which is described in the second of the series, is a mistake. The wildest improbabilities, like Mark Twain's account of the ascent of the Rigi, are perfectly legitimate; but simple physical impossibilities are out of place, because they transport us at once to another world —a world in which nothing short of the feats of a Munchausen are satisfying.

Elsewhere, as in the papers on the 'Salons Ridicules,' and in the account of his first introduction to a Parisian 'at home,' Daudet faintly recalls the satiric humour of Thackeray, but it has a greater appearance of kindliness, and is far more commonplace.

We have now noticed three several faculties the presence of which make for a similarity in the work of two men who at first sight seem to have literally nothing in common; but when these are admitted, there still remain striking points of resemblance which cannot be explained antecedently. Such, for example, is the kindred nature of the character-studies. Dickens has, of course, endowed our literature with a collection of brilliantly executed portraits of unequalled freshness and individuality. His men and women have, almost without exception, strongly marked characteristics which are never lost to view for a moment, which probably develop into nothing further, but are delightful in themselves. The characters may be important or not: in the former case the outline is more completely filled in, but the silhouette is as decided in one case as the other. The limits are fixed; there is no room for growth, and nothing is left to the imagination of the reader by a writer in whom the source of invention was always bubbling over. The world to which we are introduced is not wholly like real life, but it is one in which we are glad to forget for a time our more humdrum fellow-men. To individualise would be to make a list of names which even now are household words. Daudet is less known to us, but it requires little more than a glance to convince one that his method, except in the case of the more important characters, is virtually identical.

The staff of the Gymnase Moronval have already been alluded to, and they will serve my present purpose as well as any other characters. Not only are Moronval himself, Hirsch, Labassindre, and D'Argenton lined in with all possible decision, but, following Dickens's almost invariable expedient, Daudet has equipped them all with tricks and catchwords which are constantly being insisted on, as if one's recognition of them might otherwise be doubtful. Evariste Moronval is a cringing, sponging, ambitious West Indian, with literary aspirations and a dropping of the 'r's' in ordinary speech which has a tendency to become tedious; Labassindre, formerly a workman in an iron foundry, and now a singer, a coarse-fibred heartless brute, with a spice of pseudo-artistic jargon, and an appreciation of the dignity of labour which dates from the day of his quitting the foundry, has his own set of stock phrases, and when he is not rolling them out is trying his favourite note. Hirsch is a sham doctor, a *chevalier d'industrie* like the others, whose patients are mostly out of town, who is armed with a bag of powder which makes people sneeze, and devotes his time to futile chemical experiments. As for D'Argenton, who is drawn in a masterly way, his note is a cold selfishness, which will sacrifice a good deal to be fawned upon and worshipped, but will sacrifice nothing at all for any other object. In conversation he moves on relentlessly like a very car of Juggernaut. Inexorably he repeats his feeble retort or crushing platitude, 'Alors je lui ai dit ce mot cruel.' He too, like Moronval, is literary, but a poet, while the other would be a journalist. At moments the poetic impulse is strong on him, his frenzied brain teems with ideas, but they are too ethereal for translation to paper; the result is that other writers, whose sensibility is not so fine, appropriate them; Emile Augier himself is not above culling the choicest blooms from the unwritten 'Pommes d'Atalante.' All this is clever enough, but it is in D'Argenton's relations to Jack and Jack's mother that Daudet's individual skill is displayed. Here there is a subtlety of which Dickens was incapable, an art which does not describe a character in set terms but expounds it by its actions.

If we turn to Dickens's most ambitious attempt in a line which, for him, always spelt failure—Edith Dombey—his shortcomings will be very patent. Edith has naturally been contrasted, much to her disadvantage, with Ethel Newcome, but we will rather take Rosalie Roumestan, who is a representative example of Daudet's workmanship, for comparison with her. The subject of 'Numa

Roumestan'—the book—is simply the contrast between the Northern nature at its best and the Southern—it is only charitable to suppose—at its worst. Rosalie, who inherits the clear brain and temperate nature of a Northern father, is captivated by Numa's young enthusiasm, while she is still little more than a girl, and fancies that in the glittering tinsel she sees the glow of pure gold. Such self-deception could not last long: she learns the unfaithfulness of a man who, with a strange double nature, loads her with caresses which, at the moment, are perfectly sincere. She finds him writing a letter which tears his political consistency to shreds; she hears him lavish promises, which experience tells her are mere empty words; she cannot, in the nature of things, help despising him, but she will hardly breathe it to herself. Her life is devoted to keeping up appearances for herself as well as before others—to giving her husband a dignity which does not belong to him. Proud and truthful beyond the common run, she is consistently affectionate to the man who outrages her self-respect and treads sincerity under foot. What she is, Frederica of Illyria is also, in her degree, to the most ignoble of consorts, while side by side with these two portraits hangs the consummate study of Risler, of whom one feels all along that there is a volcanic fire in the depths of his nature which may some day break out.

What Edith Dombey's provocation was everyone knows, and her nature has been portrayed for us with all the skill which Dickens could bring to an uncongenial task, but the element of staginess is sadly conspicuous: the frown and the curling lip do duty for much characterisation which cannot be expressed by so bald an employment of stage directions, and her behaviour seems to show a complete misconception by the author of his own creation. Is it conceivable for a moment that a woman the keynote of whose character is a sort of fierce pride could have behaved as she did to Mr. Dombey, lowering herself to the level of a man who was really less than human, or that she should have proclaimed the relations in which she stood to her husband before the guests at a large reception? What should have been forcible is merely exaggerated, and the result is fatal. Instead of a picture with lights and shades, with mysteries to fathom, and beauties which strike one with admiration, we have here a kind of signboard-painting, flat, unvarying and unsuggestive.

There is a class of studies in Daudet's work, due to his craving for representing in its ghastly nakedness the *grand*

drame moderne, of which we find hardly a trace in Dickens. Characters like Sidonie Risler, Séphora Leemans, or La Bachellery were absolutely abhorrent to his nature: he shut his eyes to their existence or treated them with a lightness of touch and purity of intention which purged them of unwholesomeness. What he could do he showed, once for all, in the Sykes and Nancy scenes of 'Oliver Twist'—scenes which for real power, for unforced pathos and tragic intensity have few equals—but the whole treatment is radically distinct from that of Daudet. Indeed, we find that where the latter is dealing with men and women who are swayed by passion he offers no point of resemblance to the English writer, whose fishing was by inclination, and perhaps by necessity, in less troubled waters. But if we descend a stage from the Rislers, and Fromonts, what do we find? A Chébe who is Silas Wegg under another name; a Desirée Delobelle in whom Jenny Wren lives again, alike in her lameness, her occupations, and her dreams of birds that sing and flowers that blow. Nor is this all, for Delobelle is no more original than is his devoted daughter. He has been compared to or contrasted with Crummles, though they have no common ground except their profession, which, however integral a part of Crummles it is, might in Delobelle's case just as well have been something else: Paul Astier and Pecksniff, both architects and both charlatans, are no more unlike. But Delobelle's prototype exists none the less, in the person of Turveydrop: substitute pure deportment for general staginess, and the two men are one and the same; alike in their sublime acceptance of self-sacrifice, in their use of their time, and even in the very words with which they stamp a somewhat aimless existence with the hall-mark of a high purpose. 'Je n'ai pas le droit de renoncer au théâtre,' says Delobelle, following closely the 'I have been faithful to my post since the days of his Royal Highness the Prince Regent, and I will not desert it now,' of his model.

There is one difference between them, however, in which a certain note of brutality, characteristic of Daudet, is heard—viz. that while we leave Turveydrop in the calm enjoyment of an adoration which Turveydrop the younger and his bride genuinely feel, we have in the other case Desirée's painful awakening on her deathbed to the despicable character of her father, and her hopeless appeal to a nature which has nothing natural left in it. Other instances of this aggravation for the reader of a painful

situation will be found in the half-veiled allusions of the worthies at the Gymnase Moronval to the position of Jack's mother, *in his presence*; in the hints of Ida de Barancy's own servants under similar circumstances; in the satisfaction with which Ida relieves herself of Jack on the first occasion of D'Argenton's coming to dinner—how different this to the scenes in 'David Copperfield' under the Murdstone *régime*!—and in the talk of the servants at the so-called 'soire' in 'Le Nabab,' which may well be compared with the Swarry, if the fundamental difference between their respective authors is to be appreciated.

Plots Daudet, properly speaking, has none, nor, in spite of the claims of his thick-and-thin admirers, is it possible to concede Dickens any skill in this respect. Both novelists start with a great leading idea on which are threaded the play of passion or circumstance. 'Le Nabab' is the record of the brief and meteoric course of a *nouveau riche*; 'Numa Roumestan,' 'Fromont,' and 'Les Rois en Exil,' are long-drawn and passionate duos between man and wife; 'Sapho' is the picture of the gradual degradation of a nature till all will-power is gone, and Jean Gaussin, besides sharing with Richard Carstone the distinction of being the only veritable *jeune premier* of his author, suffers at the hands of Sapho precisely what the Chancery suit is responsible for in Richard's case.

Daudet writes racy French which by no means confines itself to the lines which the Academy has laid down, and his pure narrative is generally better than that of Dickens; but in actual word-painting, in felicitous turns, and in happy similes he has nothing like the skill of his predecessor. Occasionally, indeed, he is strangely like him, as when he speaks of a solitary house which looks as if it had been sent out to reconnoitre the situation, or when he describes the tightness of Saïd's skin—a piece of portraiture for which Bounderby might have sat—but, as a general rule, he lacks both the virtues and defects which followed from Dickens's infinite power of minute observation; he could never have stopped, as Dickens does in his description of the wreck of Steerforth's boat, to tell us that the arm of a man who is pointing at the body in the water has got an arrow tattooed upon it which points in the same direction: there is a consequent greater breadth, and his description of the Forest of Sénart, of the machinery at Indret, and of the southern landscape to which he is ever fondly reverting, may be set against Dickens's great storm,

the picture of the flight of Magwitch, and his well-loved Kentish backgrounds.

For an Englishman, he cannot live with Dickens. The latter may descend to depict meanness, and, in the last of his completed works, he does so *ad nauseam*; but he is sane and wholesome: he moves us to boisterous laughter, and—not always when he means it most—to tears which are a credit to us. His characters, it is true, have little of the principle of growth in them, but then they are giants from birth: they are pleasant to linger over and live with in memory, and their vices leave no taint behind. Such must have been Dickens's ambition, but no such fate can attend the writer who deliberately sets himself to uncloak the figure of Vice, as Daudet does. Finished artist but poor moralist, he flies to the mercenary love of woman and the infatuated passion of man as the centre round which everything turns, the engrossing, absorbing interest to which everyone is liable, to which most submit. His apologist may say, with the writer of amorous ditties quoted by Poe, that, provided the morals of an author are pure, it signifies nothing what may be the morals of his books. Is Poe too severe when he concludes that, in such a case, strict poetic justice demands the detention of the writer in purgatory till a new generation shall arise which knows not his writings?

THE WHITE COMPANY.

BY A. CONAN DOYLE,

AUTHOR OF 'MICAH CLARKE.'

CHAPTER XXIX.

HOW THE BLESSED HOUR OF SIGHT CAME TO THE LADY TIPHAINE.

Sir Tristram de Rochefort, Seneschal of Auvergne and Lord of Villefranche, was a fierce and renowned soldier who had grown grey in the English wars. As lord of the marches and guardian of an exposed country-side, there was little rest for him even in times of so-called peace, and his whole life was spent in raids and outfalls upon the Brabanters, late-comers, flayers, free companions, and roving archers who wandered over his province. At times he would come back in triumph, and a dozen corpses swinging from the summit of his keep would warn evil-doers that there was still a law in the land. At others his ventures were not so happy, and he and his troop would spur it over the drawbridge with clatter of hoofs hard at their heels and whistle of arrows about their ears. Hard he was of hand and harder of heart, hated by his foes, and yet not loved by those whom he protected, for twice he had been taken prisoner, and twice his ransom had been wrung by dint of blows and tortures out of the starving peasants and ruined farmers. Wolves or watch-dogs, it was hard to say from which the sheep had most to fear.

The Castle of Villefranche was harsh and stern as its master. A broad moat, a high outer wall turreted at the corners, with a great black keep towering above all—so it lay before them in the moonlight. By the light of two flambeaux, protruded through the narrow slit-shaped openings at either side of the ponderous gate, they caught a glimpse of the glitter of fierce eyes and of the gleam of the weapons of the guard. The sight of the two-headed eagle of Du Guesclin, however, was a passport into any fortalice in France, and ere they had passed the gate the old border knight came running forwards with hands outthrown to greet his famous countryman. Nor was he less glad to see Sir Nigel, when the Englishman's errand was explained to him, for these archers had

been a sore thorn in his side and had routed two expeditions which he had sent against them. A happy day it would be for the Seneschal of Auvergne when he should learn that the last yew bow was over the marches.

The material for a feast was ever at hand in days when, if there was grim want in the cottage, there was at least rude plenty in the castle. Within an hour the guests were seated around a board which creaked under the great pasties and joints of meat, varied by those more dainty dishes in which the French excelled, the spiced ortolan and the truffled beccaficoes. The Lady Rochefort, a bright and laughter-loving dame, sat upon the left of her warlike spouse, with the Lady Tiphaine upon the right. Beneath sat Du Guesclin and Sir Nigel, with Sir Amory Monticourt, of the Order of the Hospitallers, and Sir Otto Harnit, a wandering knight from the kingdom of Bohemia. These, with Alleyne and Ford, four French squires, and the castle chaplain, made the company who sat together that night and made good cheer in the Castle of Villefranche. The great fire crackled in the grate, the hooded hawks slept upon their perches, the rough deerhounds with expectant eyes crouched upon the tiled floor; close at the elbows of the guests stood the dapper little lilac-coated pages; the laugh and jest circled round, and all was harmony and comfort. Little they recked of the brushwood men who crouched in their rags along the fringe of the forest, and looked up with wild and haggard eyes at the rich warm glow which shot a golden bar of light from the high arched windows of the castle.

Supper over, the tables dormant were cleared away as by magic, and trestles and bancals arranged round the blazing fire, for there was a bitter nip in the air. The Lady Tiphaine had sunk back in her cushioned chair, and her long dark lashes drooped low over her sparkling eyes. Alleyne, glancing at her, noted that her breath came quick and short, and that her cheeks had blanched to a lily white. Du Guesclin eyed her keenly from time to time, and passed his broad brown fingers through his crisp, curly black hair, with the air of a man who is perplexed in his mind.

'These folk here,' said the knight of Bohemia, 'they do not seem too well fed.'

'Ah, canaille!' cried the Lord of Villefranche. 'You would scarce credit it, and yet it is sooth that when I was taken at Poictiers it was all that my wife and my foster-brother could do to raise the money from them for my ransom. The sulky dogs

would rather have three twists of a rack, or the thumbikins for an hour, than pay out a denier for their own feudal father and liege lord. Yet there is not one of them but hath an old stocking full of gold pieces hid away in a snug corner.'

'Why do they not buy food then?' asked Sir Nigel. 'By St. Paul! it seemed to me that their bones were breaking through their skin.'

'It is their grutching and grumbling which makes them thin. We have a saying here, Sir Nigel, that if you pummel Jacques Bonhomme he will pat you, but if you pat him he will pummel you. Doubtless you find it so in England.'

'Ma foi, no!' said Sir Nigel. 'I have two Englishmen of this class in my train, who are at this instant, I make little doubt, as full of your wine as any cask in your cellar. He who pummelled them might come by such a pat as he would be likely to remember.'

'I cannot understand it,' quoth the seneschal, 'for the English knights and nobles whom I have met were not men to brook the insolence of the base born.'

'Perchance, my fair lord, the poor folk are sweeter and of a better countenance in England,' laughed the Lady Rochefort. 'Mon Dieu! you cannot conceive to yourself how ugly they are! Without hair, without teeth, all twisted and bent; for me, I cannot think how the good God ever came to make such people. I cannot bear it, I, and so my trusty Raoul goes ever before me with a cudgel to drive them from my path.'

'Yet they have souls, fair lady, they have souls!' murmured the chaplain, a white-haired man with a weary, patient face.

'So I have heard you tell them,' said the lord of the castle; 'and for myself, father, though I am a true son of Holy Church, yet I think that you were better employed in saying your mass and in teaching the children of my men-at-arms, than in going over the country-side to put ideas in these folks' heads which would never have been there but for you. I have heard that you have said to them that their souls are as good as ours, and that it is likely that in another life they may stand as high as the oldest blood of Auvergne. For my part, I believe that there are so many worthy knights and gallant gentlemen in heaven, who know how such things should be arranged, that there is little fear that we shall find ourselves mixed up with base roturiers and swine-herds. Tell your beads, father, and con your

psalter, but do not come between me and those whom the king has given to me!'

'God help them!' cried the old priest. 'A higher King than yours has given them to me, and I tell you here in your own castle hall, Sir Tristram de Rochefort, that you have sinned deeply in your dealings with these poor folk, and that the hour will come, and may even now be at hand, when God's hand will be heavy upon you for what you have done.' He rose as he spoke, and walked slowly from the room.

'Pest take him!' cried the French knight. 'Now, what is a man to do with a priest, Sir Bertrand?—for one can neither fight him like a man nor coax him like a woman.'

'Ah, Sir Bertrand knows, the naughty one!' cried the Lady Rochefort. 'Have we not all heard how he went to Avignon and squeezed fifty thousand crowns out of the Pope?'

'Ma foi!' said Sir Nigel, looking with a mixture of horror and admiration at Du Guesclin. 'Did not your heart sink within you? Were you not smitten with fears? Have you not felt a curse hang over you?'

'I have not observed it,' said the Frenchman carelessly. 'But, by Saint Ives! Tristram, this chaplain of yours seems to me to be a worthy man, and you should give heed to his words, for though I care nothing for the curse of a bad pope, it would be a grief to me to have aught but a blessing from a good priest.'

'Hark to that, my fair lord,' cried the Lady Rochefort. 'Take heed, I pray thee, for I do not wish to have a blight cast over me, nor a palsy of the limbs. I remember that once before you angered Father Stephen, and my tire-woman said that I lost more hair in seven days than ever before in a month.'

'If that be sign of sin, then, by Saint Paul! I have much upon my soul,' said Sir Nigel, amid a general laugh. 'But in very truth, Sir Tristram, if I may venture a word of counsel, I should advise that you make your peace with this good man.'

'He shall have four silver candlesticks,' said the seneschal moodily. 'And yet I would that he would leave the folk alone. You cannot conceive in your mind how stubborn and brainless they are. Mules and pigs are full of reason beside them. God He knows that I have had great patience with them. It was but last week that, having to raise some money, I called up to the castle Jean Goubert, who, as all men know, has a casketful of gold pieces hidden away in some hollow tree. I give you my

word that I did not so much as lay a stripe upon his fool's back, but after speaking with him, and telling him how needful the money was to me, I left him for the night to think over the matter in my dungeon. What think you that the dog did? Why, in the morning we found that he had made a rope from strips of his leathern jerkin, and had hung himself to the bar of the window.'

'For me, I cannot conceive such wickedness!' cried the lady.

'And there was Gertrude Le Bœuf, as fair a maiden as eye could see, but as bad and bitter as the rest of them. When young Amory de Valance was here last Lammastide he looked kindly upon the girl, and even spoke of taking her into his service. What does she do, with her dog of a father? Why, they tie themselves together and leap into the Linden Pool, where the water is five spears'-lengths deep. I give you my word that it was a great grief to young Amory, and it was days ere he could cast it from his mind. But how can one serve people who are so foolish and so ungrateful?'

Whilst the Seneschal of Villefranche had been detailing the evil doings of his tenants, Alleyne had been unable to take his eyes from the face of the Lady Tiphaine. She had lain back in her chair, with drooping eyelids and a bloodless face, so that he had feared at first that her journey had weighed heavily upon her, and that the strength was ebbing out of her. Of a sudden, however, there came a change, for a dash of bright colour flickered up on to either cheek, and her lids were slowly raised again upon eyes which sparkled with such a lustre as Alleyne had never seen in human eyes before, while their gaze was fixed intently, not upon the company, but on the dark tapestry which draped the wall. So transformed and so ethereal was her expression, that Alleyne, in his loftiest dream of archangel or of seraph, had never pictured so sweet, so womanly, and yet so wise a face. Glancing at Du Guesclin, Alleyne saw that he also was watching his wife closely, and from the twitching of his features, and the beads upon his brick-coloured brow, it was easy to see that he was deeply agitated by the change which he marked in her.

'How is it with you, lady?' he asked at last, in a tremulous voice.

Her eyes remained fixed intently upon the wall, and there was a long pause ere she answered him. Her voice, too, which

had been so clear and ringing, was now low and muffled as that of one who speaks from a distance.

'All is very well with me, Bertrand,' said she. 'The blessed hour of sight has come round to me again.'

'I could see it come! I could see it come!' he exclaimed, passing his fingers through his hair with the same perplexed expression as before.

'This is untoward, Sir Tristram,' he said at last. 'And I scarce know in what words to make it clear to you, and to your fair wife, and to Sir Nigel Loring, and to these other stranger knights. My tongue is a blunt one, and fitter to shout word of command than to clear up such a matter as this, of which I can myself understand little. This, however, I know, that my wife is come of a very sainted race, whom God hath in His wisdom endowed with wondrous powers, so that Tiphaine Raquenel was known throughout Brittany ere ever I first saw her at Dinan. Yet these powers are ever used for good, and they are the gift of God and not of the devil, which is the difference betwixt white magic and black.'

'Perchance it would be as well that we should send for Father Stephen,' said Sir Tristram.

'It would be best that he should come,' cried the Hospitaller.

'And bring with him a flask of holy water,' added the knight of Bohemia.

'Not so, gentlemen,' answered Sir Bertrand. 'It is not needful that this priest should be called, and it is in my mind that in asking for this ye cast some slight shadow or slur upon the good name of my wife, as though it were still doubtful whether her power came to her from above or below. If ye have indeed such a doubt, I pray that you will say so, that we may discuss the matter in a fitting way.'

'For myself,' said Sir Nigel, 'I have heard such words fall from the lips of this lady that I am of opinion that there is no woman, save only one, who can be in any way compared to her in beauty and in goodness. Should any gentleman think otherwise, I should deem it great honour to run a small course with him, or debate the matter in whatever way might be most pleasing to him.'

'Nay, it would ill become me to cast a slur upon a lady who is both my guest and the wife of my comrade in arms,' said the Seneschal of Villefranche. 'I have perceived also that on her

mantle there is marked a silver cross, which is surely sign enough that there is nought of evil in these strange powers which you say that she possesses.'

This argument of the seneschal's appealed so powerfully to the Bohemian and to the Hospitaller that they at once intimated that their objections had been entirely overcome, while even the Lady Rochefort, who had sat shivering and crossing herself, ceased to cast glances at the door, and allowed her fears to turn to curiosity.

'Among the gifts which have been vouchsafed to my wife,' said Du Guesclin, 'there is the wondrous one of seeing into the future; but it comes very seldom upon her, and goes as quickly, for none can command it. The blessed hour of sight, as she hath named it, has come but thrice since I have known her, and I can vouch for it that all that she hath told me was true, for on the evening of the Battle of Auray she said that the morrow would be an ill day for me and for Charles of Blois. Ere the sun had sunk again he was dead, and I the prisoner of Sir John Chandos. Yet it is not every question that she can answer, but only those——'

'Bertrand, Bertrand!' cried the lady in the same muttering far-away voice, 'the blessed hour passes. Use it, Bertrand, while you may.'

'I will, my sweet. Tell me, then, what fortune comes upon me?'

'Danger, Bertrand—deadly, pressing danger—which creeps upon you and you know it not.'

The French soldier burst into a thunderous laugh, and his green eyes twinkled with amusement. 'At what time during these twenty years would not that have been a true word?' he cried. 'Danger is the air that I breathe. But is this so very close, Tiphaine?'

'Here—now—close upon you!' The words came out in broken strenuous speech, while the lady's fair face was writhed and drawn like that of one who looks upon a horror which strikes the words from her lips. Du Guesclin gazed round the tapestried room, at the screens, the tables, the abace, the credence, the buffet with its silver salver, and the half-circle of friendly wondering faces. There was an utter stillness, save for the sharp breathing of the Lady Tiphaine and for the gentle soughing of the wind outside, which wafted to their ears the distant call upon a swine-herd's horn.

'The danger may bide,' said he, shrugging his broad shoulders. 'And now, Tiphaine, tell us what will come of this war in Spain.'

'I can see little,' she answered, straining her eyes and puckering her brow, as one who would fain clear her sight. 'There are mountains, and dry plains, and flash of arms and shouting of battle-cries. Yet it is whispered to me that by failure you will succeed.'

'Ha! Sir Nigel, how like you that?' quoth Bertrand, shaking his head. 'It is like mead and vinegar, half sweet, half sour. And is there no question which you would ask my lady?'

'Certes there is. I would fain know, fair lady, how all things are at Twynham Castle, and above all how my sweet lady employs herself.'

'To answer this I would fain lay hand upon one whose thoughts turn strongly to this castle which you have named. Nay, my Lord Loring, it is whispered to me that there is another here who hath thought more deeply of it than you.'

'Thought more of mine own home?' cried Sir Nigel. 'Lady, I fear that in this matter at least you are mistaken.'

'Not so, Sir Nigel. Come hither, young man, young English squire with the grey eyes! Now give me your hand, and place it here across my brow, that I may see that which you have seen. What is this that rises before me? Mist, mist, rolling mist with a square black tower above it. See it shreds out, it thins, it rises, and there lies a castle in a green plain, with the sea beneath it, and a great church within a bow-shot. There are two rivers which run through the meadows, and between them lie the tents of the besiegers.'

'The besiegers!' cried Alleyne, Ford, and Sir Nigel, all three in a breath.

'Yes, truly, and they press hard upon the castle, for they are an exceeding multitude and full of courage. See how they storm and rage against the gate, while some rear ladders, and others, line after line, sweep the walls with their arrows. There are many leaders who shout and beckon, and one, a tall man with a golden beard, who stands before the gate stamping his foot and hallooing them on, as a pricker doth the hounds. But those in the castle fight bravely. There is a woman, two women, who stand upon the walls, and give heart to the men-at-arms. They shower down arrows, darts and great stones. Ah! they have struck down

the tall leader, and the others give back. The mist thickens and I can see no more.'

'By Saint Paul!' said Sir Nigel, 'I do not think that there can be any such doings at Christchurch, and I am very easy of the fortalice so long as my sweet wife hangs the key of the outer bailey at the head of her bed. Yet I will not deny that you have pictured the castle as well as I could have done myself, and I am full of wonderment at all that I have heard and seen.'

'I would, Lady Tiphaine,' cried the Lady Rochefort, 'that you would use your power to tell me what hath befallen my golden bracelet which I wore when hawking upon the second Sunday of Advent, and have never set eyes upon since.'

'Nay, lady,' said Du Guesclin, 'it does not befit so great and wondrous a power to pry and search and play the varlet even to the beautiful châtelaine of Villefranche. Ask a worthy question, and, with the blessing of God, you shall have a worthy answer.'

'Then I would fain ask,' cried one of the French squires, 'as to which may hope to conquer in these wars betwixt the English and ourselves.'

'Both will conquer and each will hold its own,' answered the Lady Tiphaine.

'Then we shall still hold Gascony and Guienne?' cried Sir Nigel.

The lady shook her head. 'French land, French blood, French speech,' she answered. 'They are French, and France shall have them.'

'But not Bordeaux?' cried Sir Nigel excitedly.

'Bordeaux also is for France.'

'But Calais?'

'Calais too.'

'Woe worth me then, and ill hail to these evil words! If Bordeaux and Calais be gone, then what is left for England?'

'It seems indeed that there are evil times coming upon your country,' said Du Guesclin. 'In our fondest hopes we never thought to hold Bordeaux. By Saint Ives! this news hath warmed the heart within me. Our dear country will then be very great in the future, Tiphaine?'

'Great, and rich, and beautiful,' she cried. 'Far down the course of time I can see her still leading the nations, a wayward queen among the peoples, great in war, but greater in peace, quick

in thought, deft in action, with her people's will for her sole monarch, from the sands of Calais to the blue seas of the south.'

'Ha!' cried Du Guesclin, with his eyes flashing in triumph, 'you hear her, Sir Nigel?—and she never yet said word which was not sooth.'

The English knight shook his head moodily. 'What of my own poor country?' said he. 'I fear, lady, that what you have said bodes but small good for her.'

The lady sat with parted lips, and her breath came quick and fast. 'My God!' she cried, 'what is this that is shown me? Whence come they, these peoples, these lordly nations, these mighty countries which rise up before me? I look beyond, and others rise, and yet others, far and farther to the shores of the uttermost waters. They crowd! They swarm! The world is given to them, and it resounds with the clang of their hammers and the ringing of their church bells. They call them many names, and they rule them this way or that, but they are all English, for I can hear the voices of the people. On I go, and onwards over seas where man hath never yet sailed, and I see a great land under new stars and a stranger sky, and still the land is England. Where have her children not gone? What have they not done? Her banner is planted on ice. Her banner is scorched in the sun. She lies athwart the lands, and her shadow is over the seas. Bertrand, Bertrand! we are undone, for the buds of her bud are even as our choicest flower!' Her voice rose into a wild cry, and throwing up her arms she sank back white and nerveless into the deep oaken chair.

'It is over,' said Du Guesclin moodily, as he raised her drooping head with his strong brown hand. 'Wine for the lady, squire! The blessed hour of sight hath passed.'

CHAPTER XXX.

HOW THE BRUSHWOOD MEN CAME TO THE CHÂTEAU OF VILLEFRANCHE.

It was late ere Alleyne Edricson, having carried Sir Nigel the goblet of spiced wine which it was his custom to drink after the curling of his hair, was able at last to seek his chamber. It was a stone-flagged room upon the second floor, with a bed in a recess

for him, and two smaller pallets on the other side, on which Aylward and Hordle John were already snoring. Alleyne had knelt down to his evening orisons, when there came a tap at his door, and Ford entered with a small lamp in his hand. His face was deadly pale, and his hand shook until the shadows flickered up and down the wall.

'What is it, Ford?' cried Alleyne, springing to his feet.

'I can scarce tell you,' said he, sitting down on the side of the couch, and resting his chin upon his hand. 'I know not what to say or what to think.'

'Has aught befallen you, then?'

'Yes, or I have been slave to my own fancy. I tell you, lad, that I am all undone, like a fretted bow-string. Hark hither, Alleyne! it cannot be that you have forgotten little Tita, the daughter of the old glass-stainer at Bordeaux?'

'I remember her well.'

'She and I, Alleyne, broke the lucky groat together ere we parted, and she wears my ring upon her finger. "Caro mio," quoth she when last we parted, "I shall be near thee in the wars, and thy danger will be my danger." Alleyne, as God is my help, as I came up the stairs this night I saw her stand before me, her face in tears, her hands out as though in warning—I saw it, Alleyne, even as I see those two archers upon their couches. Our very finger-tips seemed to meet, ere she thinned away like a mist in the sunshine.'

'I would not give overmuch thought to it,' answered Alleyne. 'Our minds will play us strange pranks, and bethink you that these words of the Lady Tiphaine Du Guesclin have wrought upon us and shaken us.'

Ford shook his head. 'I saw little Tita as clearly as though I were back at the Rue des Apôtres at Bordeaux,' said he. 'But the hour is late, and I must go.'

'Where do you sleep, then?'

'In the chamber above you. May the saints be with us all!' He rose from the couch and left the chamber, while Alleyne could hear his feet sounding upon the winding stair. The young squire walked across to the window and gazed out at the moonlit landscape, his mind absorbed by the thought of the Lady Tiphaine, and of the strange words that she had spoken as to what was going forward at Castle Twynham. Leaning his elbows upon the stonework, he was deeply plunged in reverie, when in a

moment his thoughts were brought back to Villefranche and to the scene before him.

The window at which he stood was in the second floor of that portion of the castle which was nearest to the keep. In front lay the broad moat, with the moon lying upon its surface, now clear and round, now drawn lengthwise as the breeze stirred the waters. Beyond, the plain sloped down to a thick wood, while further to the left a second wood shut out the view. Between the two an open glade stretched, silvered in the moonshine, with the river curving across the lower end of it.

As he gazed, he saw of a sudden a man steal forth from the wood into the open clearing. He walked with his head sunk, his shoulders curved, and his knees bent, as one who strives hard to remain unseen. Ten paces from the fringe of trees he glanced around, and waving his hand he crouched down, and was lost to sight among a belt of furze-bushes. After him there came a second man, and after him a third, a fourth, and a fifth, stealing across the narrow open space and darting into the shelter of the brushwood. Nine-and-seventy Alleyne counted of these dark figures flitting across the line of the moonlight. Many bore huge burdens upon their backs, though what it was that they carried he could not tell at the distance. Out of the one wood and into the other they passed, all with the same crouching, furtive gait, until the black bristle of trees had swallowed up the last of them.

For a moment Alleyne stood in the window, still staring down at the silent forest, uncertain as to what he should think of these midnight walkers. Then he bethought him that there was one beside him who was fitter to judge on such a matter. His fingers had scarce rested upon Aylward's shoulder ere the bowman was on his feet, with his hand outstretched to his sword.

'Qui va?' he cried. 'Holà! mon petit. By my hilt! I thought there had been a camisade. What then, mon gar?'

'Come hither by the window, Aylward,' said Alleyne. 'I have seen fourscore men pass from yonder shaw across the glade, and nigh every man of them had a great burden on his back. What think you of it?'

'I think nothing of it, mon camarade! There are as many masterless folk in this country as there are rabbits on Cowdray Down, and there are many who show their faces by night but would dance in a hempen collar if they stirred forth in the day.

On all the French marches are droves of outcasts, reivers, spoilers, and draw-latches, of whom I judge that these are some, though I marvel that they should dare to come so nigh to the castle of the seneschal. All seems very quiet now,' he added, peering out of the window.

'They are in the further wood,' said Alleyne.

'And there they may bide. Back to rest, mon petit; for, by my hilt! each day now will bring its own work. Yet it would be well to shoot the bolt in yonder door when one is in strange quarters. So!' He threw himself down upon his pallet, and in an instant was fast asleep.

It might have been about three o'clock in the morning when Alleyne was aroused from a troubled sleep by a low cry or exclamation. He listened, but, as he heard no more, he set it down as the challenge of the guard upon the walls, and dropped off to sleep once more. A few minutes later he was disturbed by a gentle creaking of his own door, as though some one were pushing cautiously against it, and immediately afterwards he heard the soft thud of cautious footsteps upon the stair which led to the room above, followed by a confused noise and a muffled groan. Alleyne sat up on his couch with all his nerves in a tingle, uncertain whether these sounds might come from a simple cause—some sick archer and visiting leech perhaps—or whether they might have a more sinister meaning. But what danger could threaten them here in this strong castle, under the care of famous warriors, with high walls and a broad moat around them? Who was there that could injure them? He had well-nigh persuaded himself that his fears were a foolish fancy, when his eyes fell upon that which sent the blood cold to his heart and left him gasping, with hands clutching at the counterpane.

Right in front of him was the broad window of the chamber, with the moon shining brightly through it. For an instant something had obscured the light, and now a head was bobbing up and down outside, the face looking in at him, and swinging slowly from one side of the window to the other. Even in that dim light there could be no mistaking those features. Drawn, distorted and blood-stained, they were still those of the young fellow-squire who had sat so recently upon his own couch. With a cry of horror Alleyne sprang from his bed and rushed to the casement, while the two archers, aroused by the sound, seized their weapons and stared about them in bewilderment. One

glance was enough to show Edricson that his fears were but too true. Foully murdered, with a score of wounds upon him and a rope round his neck, his poor friend had been cast from the upper window and swung slowly in the night wind, his body rasping against the wall and his disfigured face upon a level with the casement.

'My God!' cried Alleyne, shaking in every limb. 'What has come upon us? What devil's deed is this?'

'Here is flint and steel,' said John stolidly. 'The lamp, Aylward! This moonshine softens a man's heart. Now we may use the eyes which God hath given us.'

'By my hilt!' cried Aylward, as the yellow flame flickered up, 'it is indeed young master Ford, and I think that this seneschal is a black villain, who dare not face us in the day, but would murther us in our sleep. By the twang of string! if I do not soak a goose's feather with his heart's blood, it will be no fault of Samkin Aylward of the White Company.'

'But, Aylward, think of the men whom I saw yesternight,' said Alleyne. 'It may not be the seneschal. It may be that others have come into the castle. I must to Sir Nigel ere it be too late. Let me go, Aylward, for my place is by his side.'

'One moment, mon gar. Put that steel head-piece on the end of my yew-stave. So! I will put it first through the door; for it is ill to come out when you can neither see nor guard yourself. Now camarades, out swords and stand ready! Holà, by my hilt! it is time that we were stirring!'

As he spoke, a sudden shouting broke forth in the castle, with the scream of a woman and the rush of many feet. Then came the sharp clink of clashing steel, and a roar like that of an angry lion—'Notre Dame Du Guesclin! St. Ives! St. Ives!' The bowman pulled back the bolt of the door, and thrust out the head-piece at the end of the bow. A crash, the clatter of the steel-cap upon the ground, and, ere the man who struck could heave up for another blow, the archer had passed his sword through his body. 'On, camarades, on!' he cried; and, breaking fiercely past two men who threw themselves in his way, he sped down the broad corridor in the direction of the shouting.

A sharp turning, and then a second one, brought them to the head of a short stair, from which they looked straight down upon the scene of the uproar. A square oak-floored hall lay beneath them, from which opened the doors of the principal guest-

chambers. This hall was as light as day, for torches burned in numerous sconces upon the walls, throwing strange shadows from the tusked or antlered heads which ornamented them. At the very foot of the stair, close to the open door of their chamber, lay the seneschal and his wife: she with her head shorn from her shoulders, he thrust through with a sharpened stake, which still protruded from either side of his body. Three servants of the castle lay dead beside them, all torn and draggled, as though a pack of wolves had been upon them. In front of the central guest-chamber stood Du Guesclin and Sir Nigel, half-clad and unarmoured, with the mad joy of battle gleaming in their eyes. Their heads were thrown back, their lips compressed, their blood-stained swords poised over their right shoulders, and their left feet thrown out. Three dead men lay huddled together in front of them; while a fourth, with the blood squirting from a severed vessel, lay back with updrawn knees, breathing in wheezy gasps. Further back—all panting together, like the wind in a tree—there stood a group of fierce wild creatures, bare-armed and bare-legged, gaunt, unshaven, with deep-set murderous eyes and wild-beast faces. With their flashing teeth, their bristling hair, their mad leapings and screamings, they seemed to Alleyne more like fiends from the pit than men of flesh and blood. Even as he looked, they broke into a hoarse yell and dashed once more upon the two knights, hurling themselves madly upon their sword-points; clutching, scrambling, biting, tearing, careless of wounds if they could but drag the two soldiers to earth. Sir Nigel was thrown down by the sheer weight of them, and Sir Bertrand with his thunderous war-cry was swinging round his heavy sword to clear a space for him to rise, when the whistle of two long English arrows, and the rush of the squire and the two English archers down the stairs, turned the tide of the combat. The assailants gave back, the knights rushed forward, and in a very few moments the hall was cleared, and Hordle John had hurled the last of the wild men down the steep steps which led from the end of it.

'Do not follow them,' cried Du Guesclin. 'We are lost if we scatter. For myself I care not a denier, though it is a poor thing to meet one's end at the hands of such scum; but I have my dear lady here, who must by no means be risked. We have breathing-space now, and I would ask you, Sir Nigel, what it is that you would counsel?'

'By St. Paul!' answered Sir Nigel, 'I can by no means un-

derstand what hath befallen us, save that I have been woken up by your battle-cry, and, rushing forth, found myself in the midst of this small bickering. Harrow and alas for the lady and the seneschal! What dogs are they who have done this bloody deed?'

'They are the Jacks, the men of the brushwood. They have the castle, though I know not how it hath come to pass. Look from this window into the bailey.'

'By heaven!' cried Sir Nigel, 'it is as bright as day with the torches. The gates stand open, and there are three thousand of them within the walls. See how they rush and scream and wave! What is it that they thrust out through the postern door? My God! it is a man-at-arms, and they pluck him limb from limb, like hounds on a wolf. Now another, and yet another. They hold the whole castle, for I see their faces at the windows. See, there are some with great bundles on their backs.'

'It is dried wood from the forest. They pile them against the walls and set them in a blaze. Who is this who tries to check them? By St. Ives! it is the good priest who spake for them in the hall. He kneels, he prays, he implores! What! villains, would ye raise hands against those who have befriended you? Ah, the butcher has struck him! He is down! They stamp him under their feet! They tear off his gown and wave it in the air! See now, how the flames lick up the walls! Are there none left to rally round us? With a hundred men we might hold our own.'

'Oh, for my Company!' cried Sir Nigel. 'But where is Ford, Alleyne?'

'He is foully murdered, my fair lord.'

'The saints receive him! May he rest in peace! But here come some at last who may give us counsel, for amid these passages it is ill to stir without a guide.'

As he spoke, a French squire and the Bohemian knight came rushing down the steps, the latter bleeding from a slash across his forehead.

'All is lost!' he cried. 'The castle is taken and on fire, the seneschal is slain, and there is nought left for us.'

'On the contrary,' quoth Sir Nigel, 'there is much left to us, for there is a very honourable contention before us, and a fair lady for whom to give our lives. There are many ways in which a man might die, but none better than this.'

'You can tell us, Godfrey,' said Du Guesclin to the French squire: 'how came these men into the castle, and what succours can we count upon? By St. Ives! if we come not quickly to some counsel we shall be burned like young rooks in a nest.'

The squire, a dark slender stripling, spoke firmly and quickly, as one who was trained to swift action. 'There is a passage under the earth into the castle,' said he, 'and through it some of the Jacks made their way, casting open the gates for the others. They have had help from within the walls, and the men-at-arms were heavy with wine: they must have been slain in their beds, for these devils crept from room to room with soft step and ready knife. Sir Amory the Hospitaller was struck down with an axe as he rushed before us from his sleeping-chamber. Save only ourselves, I do not think that there are any left alive.'

'What, then, would you counsel?'

'That we make for the keep. It is unused, save in time of war, and the key hangs from my poor lord and master's belt.'

'There are two keys there.'

'It is the larger. Once there, we might hold the narrow stair; and at least, as the walls are of a greater thickness, it would be longer ere they could burn them. Could we but carry the lady across the bailey, all might be well with us.'

'Nay; the lady hath seen something of the work of war,' said Tiphaine, coming forth, as white, as grave, and as unmoved as ever. 'I would not be a hamper to you, my dear spouse and gallant friends. Rest assured of this, that if all else fail I have always a safeguard here'—drawing a small silver-hilted poniard from her bosom—'which sets me beyond the fear of these vile and blood-stained wretches.'

'Tiphaine,' cried Du Guesclin, 'I have always loved you; and now, by Our Lady of Rennes! I love you more than ever. Did I not know that your hand will be as ready as your words, I would myself turn my last blow upon you, ere you should fall into their hands. Lead on, Godfrey! A new golden pyx will shine in the minster of Dinan if we come safely through with it.'

The attention of the insurgents had been drawn away from murder to plunder, and all over the castle might be heard their cries and whoops of delight as they dragged forth the rich tapestries, the silver flagons, and the carved furniture. Down in the courtyard half-clad wretches, their bare limbs all mottled with blood-stains, strutted about with plumed helmets upon their

heads, or with the Lady Rochefort's silken gowns girt round their loins and trailing on the ground behind them. Casks of choice wine had been rolled out from the cellars, and starving peasants squatted, goblet in hand, draining off vintages which De Rochefort had set aside for noble and royal guests. Others, with slabs of bacon and joints of dried meat upon the ends of their pikes, held them up to the blaze or tore at them ravenously with their teeth. Yet all order had not been lost amongst them, for some hundreds of the better armed stood together in a silent group, leaning upon their rude weapons and looking up at the fire, which had spread so rapidly as to involve one whole side of the castle. Already Alleyne could hear the crackling and roaring of the flames, while the air was heavy with heat and full of the pungent whiff of burning wood.

CHAPTER XXXI.

HOW FIVE MEN HELD THE KEEP OF VILLEFRANCHE.

UNDER the guidance of the French squire the party passed down two narrow corridors. The first was empty, but at the head of the second stood a peasant sentry, who started off at the sight of them, yelling loudly to his comrades. 'Stop him, or we are undone!' cried Du Guesclin, and had started to run, when Aylward's great war-bow twanged like a harp-string, and the man fell forward upon his face, with twitching limbs and clutching fingers. Within five paces of where he lay a narrow and little-used door led out into the bailey. From beyond it came such a Babel of hooting and screaming, horrible oaths and yet more horrible laughter, that the stoutest heart might have shrunk from casting down the frail barrier which faced them.

'Make straight for the keep!' said Du Guesclin, in a sharp stern whisper. 'The two archers in front, the lady in the centre, a squire on either side, while we three knights shall bide behind and beat back those who press upon us. So! Now open the door, and God have us in His holy keeping!'

For a few moments it seemed that their object would be attained without danger, so swift and so silent had been their movements. They were halfway across the bailey ere the frantic howling peasants made a movement to stop them. The few who threw themselves in their way were overpowered or brushed aside,

while the pursuers were beaten back by the ready weapons of the three cavaliers. Unscathed they fought their way to the door of the keep, and faced round upon the swarming mob, while the squire thrust the great key into the lock.

'My God!' he cried, 'it is the wrong key.'

'The wrong key!'

'Dolt, fool that I am! This is the key of the castle gate; the other opens the keep. I must back for it!' He turned, with some wild intention of retracing his steps, but at the instant a great jagged rock, hurled by a brawny peasant, struck him full upon the ear, and he dropped senseless to the ground.

'This is key enough for me!' quoth Hordle John, picking up the huge stone, and hurling it against the door with all the strength of his enormous body. The lock shivered, the wood smashed, the stone flew into five pieces, but the iron clamps still held the door in its position. Bending down, he thrust his great fingers under it, and with a heave raised the whole mass of wood and iron from its hinges. For a moment it tottered and swayed, and then, falling outward, buried him in its ruin, while his comrades rushed into the dark archway which led to safety.

'Up the steps, Tiphaine!' cried Du Guesclin. 'Now round, friends, and beat them back.' The mob of peasants had surged in upon their heels, but the two trustiest blades in Europe gleamed upon that narrow stair, and four of their number dropped upon the threshold. The others gave back and gathered in a half circle round the open door, gnashing their teeth and shaking their clenched hands at the defenders. The body of the French squire had been dragged out by them and hacked to pieces. Three or four others had pulled John from under the door, when he suddenly bounded to his feet, and clutching one in either hand dashed them together with such force that they fell senseless across each other upon the ground. With a kick and a blow he freed himself from two others who clung to him, and in a moment he was within the portal with his comrades.

Yet their position was a desperate one. The peasants from far and near had been assembled for this deed of vengeance, and not less than six thousand were within or around the walls of the Château of Villefranche. Ill armed and half starved, they were still desperate men, to whom danger had lost all fears: for what was death that they should shun it to cling to such a life as theirs? The castle was theirs, and the roaring flames were spurt-

ing through the windows and flickering high above the turrets on two sides of the quadrangle. From either side they were sweeping down from room to room and from bastion to bastion in the direction of the keep. Faced by an army, and girt in by fire, were six men and one woman; but some of them were men so trained to danger and so wise in war that even now the combat was less unequal than it seemed. Courage and resource were penned in by desperation and numbers, while the great yellow sheets of flame threw their lurid glare over the scene of death.

'There is but space for two upon a step to give free play to our sword-arms,' said Du Guesclin. 'Do you stand with me, Nigel, upon the lowest. France and England will fight together this night. Sir Otto, I pray you to stand behind us with this young squire. The archers may go higher yet and shoot over our heads. I would that we had our harness, Nigel!'

'Often have I heard my dear Sir John Chandos say that a knight should never, even when a guest, be parted from it. Yet it will be more honour to us if we come well out of it. We have a vantage, since we see them against the light and they can scarce see us. It seems to me that they muster for an onslaught.'

'If we can but keep them in play,' said the Bohemian, 'it is likely that these flames may bring us succour if there be any true men in the country.'

'Bethink you, my fair lord,' said Alleyne to Sir Nigel, 'that we have never injured these men, nor have we cause of quarrel against them. Would it not be well, if but for the lady's sake, to speak them fair and see if we may not come to honourable terms with them?'

'Not so, by Saint Paul!' cried Sir Nigel. 'It does not accord with mine honour, nor shall it ever be said that I, a knight of England, was ready to hold parley with men who have slain a fair lady and a holy priest.'

'As well hold parley with a pack of ravening wolves,' said the French captain. 'Ha! Notre Dame Du Guesclin! Saint Ives! Saint Ives!'

As he thundered forth his war-cry, the Jacks who had been gathering before the black arch of the gateway rushed in madly in a desperate effort to carry the staircase. Their leaders were a small man, dark in the face, with his beard done up in two plaits, and another larger man, very bowed in the shoulders, with a huge club studded with sharp nails in his hand. The first had

not taken three steps ere an arrow from Aylward's bow struck him full in the chest, and he fell coughing and spluttering across the threshold. The other rushed onwards, and breaking between Du Guesclin and Sir Nigel he dashed out the brains of the Bohemian with a single blow of his clumsy weapon. With three swords through him he still struggled on, and had almost won his way through them ere he fell dead upon the stair. Close at his heels came a hundred furious peasants, who flung themselves again and again against the five swords which confronted them. It was cut and parry and stab as quick as eye could see or hand act. The door was piled with bodies, and the stone floor was slippery with blood. The deep shout of Du Guesclin, the hard hissing breath of the pressing multitude, the clatter of steel, the thud of falling bodies, and the screams of the stricken, made up such a medley as came often in after years to break upon Alleyne's sleep. Slowly and sullenly at last the throng drew off, with many a fierce backward glance, while eleven of their number lay huddled in front of the stair which they had failed to win.

'The dogs have had enough,' said Du Guesclin.

'By Saint Paul! there appear to be some very worthy and valiant persons among them,' observed Sir Nigel. 'They are men from whom, had they been of better birth, much honour and advancement might be gained. Even as it is, it is a great pleasure to have seen them. But what is this that they are bringing forward?'

'It is as I feared,' growled Du Guesclin. 'They will burn us out, since they cannot win their way past us. Shoot straight and hard, archers; for, by St. Ives! our good swords are of little use to us.'

As he spoke, a dozen men rushed forward, each screening himself behind a huge fardel of brushwood. Hurling their burdens in one vast heap within the portal, they threw burning torches upon the top of it. The wood had been soaked in oil, for in an instant it was ablaze, and a long hissing yellow flame licked over the heads of the defenders, and drove them farther up to the first floor of the keep. They had scarce reached it, however, ere they found that the wooden joists and planks of the flooring were already on fire. Dry and worm-eaten, a spark upon them became a smoulder, and a smoulder a blaze. A choking smoke filled the air, and the five could scarce grope their way to the staircase which led up to the very summit of the square tower.

Strange was the scene which met their eyes from this eminence. Beneath them on every side stretched the long sweep of peaceful country, rolling plain, and tangled wood, all softened and mellowed in the silver moonshine. No light, nor movement, nor any sign of human aid could be seen, but far away the hoarse clangour of a heavy bell rose and fell upon the wintry air. Beneath and around them blazed the huge fire, roaring and crackling on every side of the bailey, and even as they looked the two corner turrets fell in with a deafening crash, and the whole castle was but a shapeless mass, spouting flames and smoke from every window and embrasure. The great black tower upon which they stood rose like a last island of refuge amid this sea of fire; but the ominous crackling and roaring below showed that it would not be long ere it was engulfed also in the common ruin. At their very feet was the square courtyard, crowded with the howling and dancing peasants, their fierce faces upturned, their clenched hands waving, all drunk with bloodshed and with vengeance. A yell of execration and a scream of hideous laughter burst from the vast throng, as they saw the faces of the last survivors of their enemies peering down at them from the height of the keep. They still piled the brushwood round the base of the tower, and gambolled hand in hand around the blaze, screaming out the doggerel lines which had long been the watchword of the Jacquerie:

Cessez, cessez, gens d'armes et piétons,
De piller et manger le bonhomme,
Qui de longtemps Jacques Bonhomme
Se nomme.

Their thin shrill voices rose high above the roar of the flames and the crash of the masonry, like the yelping of a pack of wolves who see their quarry before them and know that they have well-nigh run him down.

'By my hilt!' said Aylward to John, 'it is in my mind that we shall not see Spain this journey. It is a great joy to me that I have placed my feather-bed and other things of price with that worthy woman at Lyndhurst, who will now have the use of them. I have thirteen arrows yet, and if one of them fly unfleshed, then, by the twang of string! I shall deserve my doom. First at him who flaunts with my lady's silken frock. Clap in the clout, by God! though a hand's-breadth lower than I had meant. Now for the rogue with the head upon his pike. Ha! to the inch, John.

When my eye is true, I am better at rovers than at long-butts or hoyles. A good shoot for you also, John! The villain hath fallen forward into the fire. But I pray you, John, to loose gently, and not to pluck with the drawing-hand, for it is a trick that hath marred many a fine bowman.'

Whilst the two archers were keeping up a brisk fire upon the mob beneath them, Du Guesclin and his lady were consulting with Sir Nigel upon their desperate situation.

'"Tis a strange end for one who has seen so many stricken fields,' said the French chieftain. 'For me one death is as another, but it is the thought of my sweet lady which goes to my heart.'

'Nay, Bertrand, I fear it as little as you,' said she. 'Had I my dearest wish, it would be that we should go together.'

'Well answered, fair lady!' cried Sir Nigel. 'And very sure I am that my own sweet wife would have said the same. If the end be now come, I have had great good fortune in having lived in times when so much glory was to be won, and in knowing so many valiant gentlemen and knights. But why do you pluck my sleeve, Alleyne?'

'If it please you, my fair lord, there are in this corner two great tubes of iron, with many heavy balls, which may perchance be those bombards and shot of which I have heard.'

'By Saint Ives! it is true,' cried Sir Bertrand, striding across to the recess where the ungainly, funnel-shaped, thick-ribbed engines were standing. 'Bombards they are, and of good size. We may shoot down upon them.'

'Shoot with them, quotha?' cried Aylward in high disdain, for pressing danger is the great leveller of classes. 'How is a man to take aim with these fool's toys, and how can he hope to do scath with them?'

'I will show you,' answered Sir Nigel; 'for here is the great box of powder, and if you will raise it for me, John, I will show you how it may be used. Come hither, where the folk are thickest round the fire. Now, Aylward, crane thy neck and see what would have been deemed an old wife's tale when we first turned our faces to the wars. Throw back the lid, John, and drop the box into the fire!'

A deafening roar, a fluff of bluish light, and the great square tower rocked and trembled from its very foundations, swaying this way and that like a reed in the wind. Amazed and dizzy, the defenders, clutching at the cracking parapets for support, saw

great stones, burning beams of wood, and mangled bodies hurtling past them through the air. When they staggered to their feet once more, the whole keep had settled down upon one side, so that they could scarce keep their footing upon the sloping platform. Gazing over the edge, they looked down upon the horrible destruction which had been caused by the explosion. For forty yards round the portal the ground was black with writhing, screaming figures, who struggled up and hurled themselves down again, tossing this way and that, sightless, scorched, with fire bursting from their tattered clothing. Beyond this circle of death their comrades, bewildered and amazed, cowered away from this black tower and from these invincible men, who were most to be dreaded when hope was furthest from their hearts.

'A sally, Du Guesclin, a sally!' cried Sir Nigel. 'By Saint Paul! they are in two minds, and a bold rush may turn them.' He drew his sword as he spoke and darted down the winding stairs, closely followed by his four comrades. Ere he was at the first floor, however, he threw up his arms and stopped. 'Mon Dieu!' he said, 'we are lost men!'

'What then?' cried those behind him.

'The wall hath fallen in, the stair is blocked, and the fire still rages below. By Saint Paul! friends, we have fought a very honourable fight, and may say in all humbleness that we have done our devoir, but I think that we may now go back to the Lady Tiphaine and say our orisons, for we have played our parts in this world, and it is time that we made ready for another.'

The narrow pass was blocked by huge stones littered in wild confusion over each other, with the blue choking smoke reeking up through the crevices. The explosion had blown in the wall and cut off the only path by which they could descend. Pent in, a hundred feet from earth, with a furnace raging under them and a ravening multitude all round who thirsted for their blood, it seemed indeed as though no men had ever come through such peril with their lives. Slowly they made their way back to the summit, but as they came out upon it the Lady Tiphaine darted forward and caught her husband by the wrist.

'Bertrand,' said she, 'hush and listen! I have heard the voices of men all singing together in a strange tongue.'

Breathless they stood and silent, but no sound came up to them, save the roar of the flames and the clamour of their enemies.

'It cannot be, lady,' said Du Guesclin. 'This night hath overwrought you, and your senses play you false. What men are there in this country who would sing in a strange tongue?'

'Holà!' yelled Aylward, leaping suddenly into the air with waving hands and joyous face. 'I thought I heard it ere we went down, and now I hear it again. We are saved, camarades! By these ten finger-bones, we are saved! It is the marching song of the White Company. Hush!'

With upraised forefinger and slanting head, he stood listening. Suddenly there came swelling up a deep-voiced rollicking chorus from somewhere out of the darkness. Never did choice or dainty ditty of Provence or Languedoc sound more sweetly in the ears than did the rough-tongued Saxon to the six who strained their ears from the blazing keep:

We'll drink all together
To the grey goose feather
And the land where the grey goose flew.

'Ha, by my hilt!' shouted Aylward, 'it is the dear old bow song of the Company. Here come two hundred as tight lads as ever twirled a shaft over their thumb-nails. Hark to the dogs, how lustily they sing!'

Nearer and clearer, swelling up out of the night, came the gay marching lilt:

What of the bow?
The bow was made in England,
Of true wood, of yew wood,
The wood of English bows;
For men who are free
Love the old yew-tree
And the land where the yew-tree grows.

What of the men?
The men were bred in England,
The bowmen, the yeomen,
The lads of dale and fell.
Here's to you and to you,
To the hearts that are true,
And the land where the true hearts dwell.

'They sing very joyfully,' said Du Guesclin, 'as though they were going to a festival.'

'It is their wont when there is work to be done.'

'By Saint Paul!' quoth Sir Nigel, 'it is in my mind that they come too late, for I cannot see how we are to come down from this tower.'

'There they come, the hearts of gold!' cried Aylward. 'See, they move out from the shadow. Now they cross the meadow. They are on the further side of the moat. Holà, camarades, holà! Johnston, Eccles, Cooke, Harward, Bligh! Would ye see a fair lady and two gallant knights done foully to death?'

'Who is there?' shouted a deep voice from below. 'Who is this who speaks with an English tongue?'

'It is I, old lad. It is Sam Aylward of the Company; and here is your captain, Sir Nigel Loring, and four others, all laid out to be grilled like an Easterling's herrings.'

'Curse me if I did not think that it was the style of speech of old Samkin Aylward,' said the voice, amid a buzz from the ranks. 'Wherever there are knocks going there is Sammy in the heart of it. But who are these ill-faced rogues who block the path? To your kennels, canaille! What! you dare look us in the eyes? Out swords, lads, and give them the flat of them! Waste not your shafts upon such runagate knaves.'

There was little fight left in the peasants, however, still dazed by the explosion, amazed at their own losses and disheartened by the arrival of the disciplined archers. In a very few minutes they were in full flight for their brushwood homes, leaving the morning sun to rise upon a blackened and blood-stained ruin, where it had left the night before the magnificent castle of the Seneschal of Auvergne. Already the white lines in the east were deepening into pink as the archers gathered round the keep and took counsel how to rescue the survivors.

'Had we a rope,' said Alleyne, 'there is one side which is not yet on fire, down which we might slip.'

'But how to get a rope?'

'It is an old trick,' quoth Aylward. 'Holà! Johnston, cast me up a rope, even as you did at Maupertius in the war time.'

The grizzled archer thus addressed took several lengths of rope from his comrades, and knotting them firmly together, he stretched them out in the long shadow which the rising sun threw from the frowning keep. Then he fixed the yew-stave of his bow upon end and measured the long thin black line which it threw upon the turf.

'A six-foot stave throws a twelve-foot shadow,' he muttered. 'The keep throws a shadow of sixty paces. Thirty paces of rope will be enow and to spare. Another strand, Watkin! Now pull at the end that all may be safe. So! It is ready for them.'

'But how are they to reach it?' asked the young archer beside him.

'Watch and see, young fool's-head,' growled the old bowman. He took a long string from his pouch and fastened one end to an arrow.

'All ready, Samkin?'

'Ready, camarade.'

'Close to your hand then.' With an easy pull he sent the shaft flickering gently up, falling upon the stonework within a foot of where Aylward was standing. The other end was secured to the rope, so that in a minute a good strong cord was dangling from the only sound side of the blazing and shattered tower. The Lady Tiphaine was lowered with a noose drawn fast under the arms, and the other five slid swiftly down, amid the cheers and joyous outcry of their rescuers.

CHAPTER XXXII.

HOW THE COMPANY TOOK COUNSEL ROUND THE FALLEN TREE.

'WHERE is Sir Claude Latour?' asked Sir Nigel, as his feet touched ground.

'He is in camp, near Montpezat, two hours' march from here, my fair lord,' said Johnston, the grizzled bowman who commanded the archers.

'Then we shall march thither, for I would fain have you all back at Dax in time to be in the prince's vanguard.'

'My lord,' cried Alleyne, joyfully, 'here are our chargers in the field, and I see your harness amid the plunder which these rogues have left behind them.'

'By Saint Ives! you speak sooth, young squire,' said Du Guesclin. 'There is my horse and my lady's jennet. The knaves led them from the stables, but fled without them. Now, Nigel, it is great joy to me to have seen one of whom I have often heard. Yet we must leave you now, for I must be with the King of Spain ere your army crosses the mountains.'

'I had thought that you were in Spain with the valiant Henry of Trastamare.'

'I have been there, but I came to France to raise succour for him. I shall ride back, Nigel, with four thousand of the best lances

of France at my back, so that your prince may find he hath a task which is worthy of him. God be with you, friend, and may we meet again in better times!'

'I do not think,' said Sir Nigel, as he stood by Alleyne's side, looking after the French knight and his lady, 'that in all Christendom you will meet with a more stout-hearted man or a fairer and sweeter dame. But your face is pale and sad, Alleyne! Have you perchance met with some hurt during the ruffle?'

'Nay, my fair lord, I was but thinking of my friend Ford, and how he sat upon my couch no later than yesternight.'

Sir Nigel shook his head sadly. 'Two brave squires have I lost,' said he. 'I know not why the young shoots should be plucked, and an old weed left standing, yet certes there must be some good reason, since God hath so planned it. Did you not note, Alleyne, that the Lady Tiphaine did give us warning last night that danger was coming upon us?'

'She did, my lord.'

'By Saint Paul! my mind misgives me as to what she saw at Twynham Castle. And yet I cannot think that any Scottish or French rovers could land in such force as to beleaguer the fortalice. Call the Company together, Aylward; and let us on, for it will be shame to us if we are not at Dax upon the trysting day.'

The archers had spread themselves over the ruins, but a blast upon a bugle brought them all back to the muster, with such booty as they could bear with them stuffed into their pouches or slung over their shoulders. As they formed into ranks, each man dropping silently into his place, Sir Nigel ran a questioning eye over them, and a smile of pleasure played over his face. Tall and sinewy, and brown, clear-eyed, hard-featured, with the stern and prompt bearing of experienced soldiers, it would be hard indeed for a leader to seek for a choicer following. Here and there in the ranks were old soldiers of the French wars, grizzled and lean, with fierce puckered features and shaggy bristling brows. The most, however, were young and dandy archers, with fresh English faces, their beards combed out, their hair curling from under their close steel hufkens, with gold or jewelled earrings gleaming in their ears, while their gold-spangled baldrics, their silken belts, and the chains which many of them wore round their thick brown necks, all spoke of the brave times which they had had as free companions. Each had a yew or hazel stave slung over his shoulder, plain and serviceable with the older men, but gaudily painted and carved at either

end with the others. Steel caps, mail brigandines, white surcoats with the red lion of St. George, and sword or battle-axe swinging from their belts, completed this equipment, while in some cases the murderous maule or five-foot mallet was hung across the bow-stave, being fastened to their leathern shoulder-belt by a hook in the centre of the handle. Sir Nigel's heart beat high as he looked upon their free bearing and fearless faces.

For two hours they marched through forest and marsh-land, along the left bank of the river Aveyron; Sir Nigel riding behind his Company, with Alleyne at his right hand, and Johnston, the old master bowman, walking by his left stirrup. Ere they had reached their journey's end the knight had learned all that he would know of his men, their doings and their intentions. Once, as they marched, they saw upon the further bank of the river a body of French men-at-arms, riding very swiftly in the direction of Villefranche.

'It is the Seneschal of Toulouse, with his following,' said Johnston, shading his eyes with his hand. 'Had he been on this side of the water he might have attempted something upon us.'

'I think that it would be well that we should cross,' said Sir Nigel. 'It were pity to balk this worthy seneschal, should he desire to try some small feat of arms.'

'Nay, there is no ford nearer than Tourville,' answered the old archer. 'He is on his way to Villefranche, and short will be the shrift of any Jacks who come into his hands, for he is a man of short speech. It was he and the Seneschal of Beaucaire who hung Peter Wilkins, of the Company, last Lammastide; for which, by the black rood of Waltham! they shall hang themselves, if ever they come into our power. But here are our comrades, Sir Nigel, and here is our camp.'

As he spoke, the forest pathway along which they marched opened out into a green glade, which sloped down towards the river. High leafless trees girt it in on three sides, with a thick undergrowth of holly between their trunks. At the farther end of this forest clearing there stood forty or fifty huts, built very neatly from wood and clay, with the blue smoke curling out from the roofs. A dozen tethered horses and mules grazed around the encampment, while a number of archers lounged about: some shooting at marks, while others built up great wooden fires in the open, and hung their cooking kettles above them. At the sight of their returning comrades there was a shout of welcome, and a

horseman, who had been exercising his charger behind the camp, came cantering down to them. He was a dapper, brisk man, very richly clad, with a round, clean-shaven face, and very bright black eyes, which danced and sparkled with excitement.

'Sir Nigel!' he cried. 'Sir Nigel Loring, at last! By my soul! we have awaited you this month past. Right welcome, Sir Nigel! You have had my letter?'

'It was that which brought me here,' said Sir Nigel. 'But indeed, Sir Claude Latour, it is a great wonder to me that you did not yourself lead these bowmen, for surely they could have found no better leader.'

'None, none, by the Virgin of L'Esparre!' he cried, speaking in the strange thick Gascon speech which turns every *v* into a *b*. 'But you know what these islanders of yours are, Sir Nigel. They will not be led by any save their own blood and race. There is no persuading them. Not even I, Claude Latour, Seigneur of Montchâteau, master of the high justice, the middle and the low, could gain their favour. They must needs hold a council and put their two hundred thick heads together, and then there comes this fellow Aylward and another, as their spokesmen, to say that they will disband unless an Englishman of good name be set over them. There are many of them, as I understand, who come from some great forest which lies in Hampi, or Hampti—I cannot lay my tongue to the name. Your dwelling is in those parts, and so their thoughts turned to you as their leader. But we had hoped that you would bring a hundred men with you.'

'They are already at Dax, where we shall join them,' said Sir Nigel. 'But let the men break their fast, and we shall then take counsel what to do.'

'Come into my hut,' said Sir Claude. 'It is but poor fare that I can lay before you—milk, cheese, wine, and bacon—yet your squire and yourself will doubtless excuse it. This is my house where the pennon flies before the door—a small residence to contain the Lord of Montchâteau.'

Sir Nigel sat silent and distrait at his meal, while Alleyne hearkened to the clattering tongue of the Gascon, and to his talk of the glories of his own estate, his successes in love, and his triumphs in war.

'And now that you are here, Sir Nigel,' he said at last, 'I have many fine ventures all ready for us. I have heard that Montpezat is of no great strength, and that there are two hundred

thousand crowns in the castle. At Castelnau also there is a cobbler who is in my pay, and who will throw us a rope any dark night from his house by the town wall. I promise you that you shall thrust your arms elbow-deep among good silver pieces ere the nights are moonless again; for on every hand of us are fair women, rich wine, and good plunder, as much as heart could wish.'

'I have other plans,' answered Sir Nigel curtly; 'for I have come hither to lead these bowmen to the help of the prince, our master, who may have sore need of them ere he set Pedro upon the throne of Spain. It is my purpose to start this very day for Dax upon the Adour, where he hath now pitched his camp.'

The face of the Gascon darkened, and his eyes flashed with resentment. 'For me,' he said, 'I care little for this war, and I find the life which I lead a very joyous and pleasant one. I will not go to Dax.'

'Nay, think again, Sir Claude,' said Sir Nigel gently; 'for you have ever had the name of a true and loyal knight. Surely you will not hold back now when your master hath need of you.'

'I will not go to Dax,' the other shouted.

'But your devoir—your oath of fealty?'

'I say that I will not go.'

'Then, Sir Claude, I must lead the Company without you.'

'If they will follow,' cried the Gascon with a sneer. 'These are not hired slaves, but free companions, who will do nothing save by their own good wills. In very sooth, my Lord Loring, they are ill men to trifle with, and it were easier to pluck a bone from a hungry bear than to lead a bowman out of a land of plenty and of pleasure.'

'Then I pray you to gather them together,' said Sir Nigel, 'and I will tell them what is in my mind; for if I am their leader they must to Dax, and if I am not then I know not what I am doing in Auvergne. Have my horse ready, Alleyne; for, by Saint Paul! come what may, I must be upon the homeward road ere midday.'

A blast upon the bugle summoned the bowmen to counsel, and they gathered in little knots and groups around a great fallen tree which lay athwart the glade. Sir Nigel sprang lightly upon the trunk, and stood with blinking eye and firm lips looking down at the ring of upturned warlike faces.

'They tell me, bowmen,' said he, 'that ye have grown so fond of ease and plunder and high living that ye are not to be moved

from this pleasant country. But, by Saint Paul! I will believe no such thing of you, for I can readily see that you are all very valiant men, who would scorn to live here in peace when your prince hath so great a venture before him. Ye have chosen me as a leader, and a leader I will be if ye come with me to Spain; and I vow to you that my pennon of the five roses shall, if God give me strength and life, be ever where there is most honour to be gained. But if it be your wish to loll and loiter in these glades, bartering glory and renown for vile gold and ill-gotten riches, then ye must find another leader; for I have lived in honour, and in honour I trust that I shall die. If there be forest men or Hampshire men amongst ye, I call upon them to say whether they will follow the banner of Loring.'

'Here's a Romsey man for you!' cried a young bowman with a sprig of evergreen set in his helmet.

'And a lad from Alresford!' shouted another.

'And from Milton!'

'And from Burley!'

'And from Lymington!'

'And a little one from Brockenhurst!' shouted a huge-limbed fellow who sprawled beneath a tree.

'By my hilt! lads,' cried Aylward, jumping upon the fallen trunk, 'I think that we could not look the girls in the eyes if we let the prince cross the mountains and did not pull string to clear a path for him. It is very well in time of peace to lead such a life as we have had together; but now the war-banner is in the wind once more, and, by these ten finger-bones! if he go alone, old Samkin Aylward will walk beside it.'

These words from a man so popular as Aylward decided many of the waverers, and a shout of approval burst from his audience.

'Far be it from me,' said Sir Claude Latour suavely, 'to persuade you against this worthy archer, or against Sir Nigel Loring; yet we have been together in many ventures, and perchance it may not be amiss if I say to you what I think upon the matter.'

'Peace for the little Gascon!' cried the archers. 'Let every man have his word. Shoot straight for the mark, lad, and fair play for all.'

'Bethink you, then,' said Sir Claude, 'that you go under a hard rule, with neither freedom nor pleasure—and for what? For sixpence a day, at the most; while now you may walk across the country and stretch out either hand to gather in whatever you

have a mind for. What do we not hear of our comrades who have gone with Sir John Hawkwood to Italy? In one night they have held to ransom six hundred of the richest noblemen of Mantua. They camp before a great city, and the base burghers come forth with the keys, and then they make great spoil; or, if it please them better, they take so many horse-loads of silver as a composition; and so they journey on from state to state, rich and free and feared by all. Now, is not that the proper life for a soldier?'

'The proper life for a robber!' roared Hordle John, in his thundering voice.

'And yet there is much in what the Gascon says,' said a swarthy fellow in a weather-stained doublet; 'and I for one would rather prosper in Italy than starve in Spain.'

'You were always a cur and a traitor, Mark Shaw,' cried Aylward. 'By my hilt! if you will stand forth and draw your sword I will warrant you that you will see neither one nor the other.'

'Nay, Aylward,' said Sir Nigel, 'we cannot mend the matter by broiling. Sir Claude, I think that what you have said does you little honour, and if my words aggrieve you I am ever ready to go deeper into the matter with you. But you shall have such men as will follow you, and you may go where you will, so that you come not with us. Let all who love their prince and country stand fast, while those who think more of a well-lined purse step forth upon the farther side.'

Thirteen bowmen, with hung heads and sheepish faces, stepped forward with Mark Shaw and ranged themselves behind Sir Claude. Amid the hootings and hissings of their comrades, they marched off together to the Gascon's hut, while the main body broke up their meeting and set cheerily to work packing their possessions, furbishing their weapons, and preparing for the march which lay before them. Over the Tarn and the Garonne, through the vast quagmires of Armagnac, past the swift-flowing Losse, and so down the long valley of the Adour, there was many a long league to be crossed ere they could join themselves to that dark war-cloud which was drifting slowly southwards to the line of snowy peaks, beyond which the banner of England had never yet been seen.

(To be continued.)

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THE NEW RECTOR.

BY THE AUTHOR OF 'THE HOUSE OF THE WOLF.'

CHAPTER XVIII.

A FRIEND IN NEED.

I HAVE heard that the bitterest pang a boy feels on returning to school after his first holidays is reserved for the moment when he opens his desk and recalls the happy hour, full of joyous anticipation, when he closed that desk with a bang. Oh, the pity of it! The change from that boy to this, from that morning to this evening! How meanly, how inadequately—so it seems to the urchin standing with swelling breast before the well-remembered grammar—did the lad who turned the key estimate his real happiness! How little did he enter into it or deserve it!

Just such a pang shot through the young rector's heart as he passed into the rectory porch after that scene at Mrs. Hammond's. His rage had had time to die down. With reflection had come a full sense of his position. As he entered the house he remembered—remembered only too well, grinding his teeth over the recollection—how secure, how free from embarrassments, how happy had been his situation when he last issued from that door a few, a very few, hours before. Such troubles as had then annoyed him seemed trifles light as air now. Mr. Bonamy's writ, the dislike of one section in the parish—how could he have let such things as these make him miserable for a moment?

How, indeed? Or, if there were anything grave in his situa-

tion then, what was it now? He had held his head high; henceforward he would be a byword in the parish, a man under a cloud. The position in which he had placed himself would still be his, but only because he would cling to it to the last. Under no circumstances could it any longer be a source of pride to him. He had posed, involuntarily, as the earl's friend; he must submit in the future to be laughed at by the Greggs and avoided by the Homfrays. It seemed to him indeed that his future in Claversham could be only one long series of humiliations. He was a proud man, and as he thought of this he sprang from his chair and strode up and down the room, his cheeks flaming. Had there ever been such a fall before!

Mrs. Baxter, as yet ignorant of the news, though it was by this time spreading through the town, brought him his dinner, and he ate something in the dining-room. Then he went back to the study and sat idle and listless before his writing-table. There was a number of 'Punch' lying on it, and he took this up and read it through drearily, extracting a faint pleasure from its witticisms, but never for an instant forgetting the cloud of trouble brooding over him. Years afterwards he could recall some of the jokes in that 'Punch'—with a shudder. Presently he laid it down and began to think. And then, before his thoughts became quite unbearable, they were interrupted by the sound of a voice in the hall.

He rose and stood with his back to the fire, and as he waited, his eyes on the door, his face grew hot, his brow dark. He had little doubt that the visitor was Clode. He had looked to see him before, and even anticipated the relief of pouring his thoughts into a friendly ear. Nevertheless, now the thing had come, he dreaded the first moment of meeting, scarcely knowing how to bear himself in these changed circumstances.

But it was not Clode who entered. It was Jack Smith. The rector started, and, uncertain whether the barrister had heard of the blow which had fallen on him or no, stepped forward awkwardly, and held out his hand in a constrained fashion. Jack, on his side, had his own reasons for being ill at ease with his friend. The moment, however, the men's hands met they closed on one another in the old hearty fashion, and the grip told the rector that the other knew all. 'You have heard?' he muttered.

'Mr. Bonamy told me,' the barrister answered. 'I came across without delay.'

'*You* do not think I was aware of the earl's mistake, then?' Lindo said, with a faint smile.

'I should as soon believe that I knew of it myself!' Jack replied warmly. He was glad now that he had come. As he and Lindo stood half facing one another, each with an elbow on the mantelshelf, he felt that he could conquer the chill at his own heart—that, notwithstanding all, his old friend was still dear to him. Perhaps if the rector had been prospering as before, if no cloud had arisen in his sky, it might have been different. As it was, Jack's generous heart went out to him. 'Tell me what happened, old fellow,' he said cheerily—'that is, if you have no objection to taking me into your confidence.'

'I shall be only too glad of your help,' Lindo answered thankfully, feeling indeed—so potent is a single word of sympathy—happier already. 'I would ask you to sit down, Jack,' he continued, in a tone of rather sheepish raillery, 'and have a cup of coffee or some whisky, but I do not know whether I ought to do so, since Lord Dynmore says the things are not mine.'

'I will take the responsibility,' the lawyer answered, briskly ringing the bell. 'Was my lord very rude?'

'Confoundedly!' the rector answered. And then he told his story. Jack was surprised to find him more placable than he had expected; but presently he learned that this moderation was assumed. For the rector rose as he went on, and began to pace the room, and, the motion freeing his tongue, he betrayed little by little the indignation and resentment which he really felt. Jack happened to ask him, with a view to clearing the ground, whether he had quite made up his mind not to resign, and was astonished by the force and anger with which he repudiated the thought of doing so. 'Resign? No, never!' he cried, standing still, and almost glaring at his companion. 'Why should I? What have I done? Was it my mistake, that I am to suffer for it? Was it my fault, that for penalty I am to have the tenour of my life broken? Do you think I can go back to the Docks the same man I left them? I cannot. Nor is that all, or nearly all,' he added still more warmly—'I have been called a swindler and an impostor. Am I by resigning to plead guilty to the charge?'

'No!' Jack cried, catching fire himself, 'certainly not! I did not intend for a moment to advise that course, my dear fellow. I think you would be acting very foolishly if you resigned under these circumstances.'

'I am glad of that,' the rector said, sitting down with a sigh of relief. 'I feared you did not quite enter into my feelings.'

'I do thoroughly enter into them,' the barrister answered earnestly, 'but I want to do more—I want to help you. You must not go into this business blindly, old man. And, first, I think you ought to take the archdeacon or some other clergyman into your confidence. Show him the whole of your case, I mean, and——'

'And act upon his advice?' the young rector said, rebellion already flashing in his eye.

'No, not necessarily,' the barrister answered, skilfully adapting his tone to the irritability of his patient. 'Of course your *bona fides* at the time you accepted the living is the point of importance to you, Lindo. You did not see their solicitors—the earl's people, I mean—did you?'

'No,' the rector answered somewhat sullenly.

'Then their letters conveyed to you all you knew of the living and the offer?'

'Precisely.'

'Let us see them, then,' replied Jack, rising briskly from his chair. He had already determined to say nothing of the witness whom Mr. Bonamy had mentioned to him as asserting that the rector had bribed him. He knew enough of his friend to utterly disbelieve the story, and he considered it as told to him in confidence. 'There is no time like the present,' he continued. 'You have kept the letters, of course?'

'They are here,' Lindo answered, rising also, and unlocking as he spoke the little cupboard among the books; 'I made them into a packet and indorsed them soon after I came. They have been here ever since.'

He found them after a moment's search, and, without himself examining them, threw them to Jack, who had returned to his seat. The barrister untied the string and, glancing quickly at the dates of the letters, arranged them in order and flattened them out on his knee. 'Now,' he said, 'number one! That I think I have seen before.' He mumbled over the opening sentences, and turned the page. 'Hallo!' he exclaimed, holding the letter from him, and speaking in a tone of surprise—almost of consternation—'how is this?'

'What?' said the rector.

'You have torn off the latter part of this letter? Why on earth did you do that?'

'I never did,' Lindo answered incredulously. Obeying Jack's gesture he came, and, standing by his chair, looked over his shoulder. He saw then that part of the latter half of the sheet had been torn off. The signature and the last few words of the letter were gone. He looked and wondered. 'I never did it,' he said positively, 'whoever did. You may be sure of that.'

'You are certain?'

'Absolutely certain,' the rector answered with considerable warmth. 'I remember arranging and indorsing the packet. I am quite sure that this letter was intact then, for I read each one through. That was a few evenings after I came here.'

'Have you ever shown the letters to anyone?' Jack asked suspiciously.

'Never,' said the rector; 'they have not been removed from this cupboard, to my knowledge, since I put them there.'

'Think!' Jack rejoined, pressing his point steadily. 'I want you to be quite sure. You see this letter is rendered utterly worthless by the mutilation. Indeed, to produce it would be to raise a natural suspicion that the last sentence of the letter not being in our favour, we had got rid of it. Of course the chances are that the earl's solicitors have copies, but for the present that is not our business.'

'Well,' said the rector somewhat absently—he had been rather thinking than listening—'I do remember now a circumstance which may account for this. A short time after I came a man broke into the house and ransacked this cupboard. Possibly he did it.'

'A burglar, do you mean? Was he caught?' the barrister asked, figuratively pricking up his ears.

'No—or, rather, I should say yes,' Lindo answered. And then he explained how his curate, taking the man red-handed, had let him go, in the hope that, as it was his first offence, he would take warning and live honestly.

'But who was the burglar?' Jack inquired. 'You know, I suppose? Is he in the town now?'

'Clode never told me his name,' Lindo answered. 'The man made a point of that, and I did not press for it. I remember that Clode was somewhat ashamed of his clemency.'

'He had need to be,' Jack snorted. 'It sounds an extraordinary story. All the same, Lindo, I am not sure it has any connection with this.' He held the letter up before him as though

drawing inspiration from it. 'This letter, you see,' he went on presently, 'being the first in date would be inside the packet. Why should a man who wanted perhaps a bit of paper for a spill or a pipe-light unfasten this packet and take the innermost letter? I do not believe it.'

'But no one else save myself,' Lindo urged, 'has had access to the letter. And there it is torn.'

'Yes, here it is torn,' Jack admitted, gazing thoughtfully at it; 'that is true.'

For a few moments the two sat silent, Jack fingering the letter, Lindo with his eyes fixed gloomily on the fire. Suddenly the latter broke out without warning or preface: 'What a fool I have been!' he exclaimed, his tone one of abrupt overwhelming conviction. 'Good heavens, what a fool I have been!'

His friend looked at him in surprise, and saw that his face was crimson. 'Is it about the letter?' he asked, leaning forward, his tone sharp with professional impatience. 'You do not mean to say, Lindo, that you really——'

'No, no!' the young clergyman replied, ruthlessly interrupting him. 'It has nothing to do with the letter.'

He said no more, and Jack waited for further light; but none came, and the barrister reapplied his thoughts to the problem before him. He had only just hit upon a new idea, however, when he was again diverted by an interruption from Lindo. 'Jack,' said the latter impressively, 'I want you to give a message for me.'

'Not a cartel to Lord Dynmore, I hope?' the barrister muttered.

'No,' the rector answered, getting up and poking the fire unnecessarily—what a quantity of embarrassment has been liberated before now by means of pokers!—'no, I want you to give a message to your cousin—Miss Bonamy, I mean.' The rector paused, the poker still in his hand, and stole a sharp glance at his companion; but, reassured by the discovery that he was to all appearance buried in the letter, he continued: 'Would you mind telling her that I am sorry I misjudged her a short time back—she will understand—and behaved, I fear, very ungratefully to her? She warned me that there was a rumour afloat that something was amiss with my title, and I am afraid I was very rude to her. I should like you to tell her, if you will, that I—that I am particularly ashamed of myself,' he added, with a gulp.

He did not find the words easy of utterance—far from it; but

the effort they cost him was slight and trivial compared with that which poor Jack found himself called upon to make. For a moment, indeed, he was silent, his heart rebelling against the task assigned to him. To carry *his* message to *her*! Then his nobler self answered to the call, and he spoke. His words, 'Yes, I'll tell her,' came, it is true, a little late, in a voice a trifle thick, and were uttered with a coldness which Lindo would have remarked had he not been agitated himself. But they came—at a price. The Victoria Cross for moral courage can seldom be gained by a single act of valour. Many a one has failed to gain it who had strength enough for the first blow. 'Yes, I will tell her,' Jack repeated a few seconds later, folding up the letter and laying it on the table, but so contriving that his face was hidden from his friend. 'To-morrow will do, I suppose?' he added, the faintest tinge of irony in his tone. He may be pardoned if he thought the apology he was asked to carry came a little late.

'Oh, yes, to-morrow will do,' Lindo answered with a start; he had fallen into a reverie, but now roused himself. 'I am afraid you are very tired, old fellow,' he continued, looking gratefully at his friend. 'A friend in need is a friend indeed, you know. I cannot tell you'—with a sigh—'how very good I think it was of you to come to me.'

'Nonsense!' Jack said briskly. 'It was all in the day's work. As it is, I have done nothing. And that reminds me,' he continued, facing his companion with a smile—'what of the trouble between my uncle and you? About the sheep, I mean. You have put it in some lawyers' hands, have you not?'

'Yes,' Lindo answered reluctantly.

'Quite right, too,' said the barrister. 'Who are they?'

'Turner & Grey, of Birmingham.'

'Well, I will write,' Jack answered, 'if you will let me, and tell them to let the matter stand for the present. I think that will be the best course. Bonamy won't object.'

'But he has issued a writ,' the rector explained. A writ seemed to him a formidable engine. As well dally before the mouth of a cannon.

Jack, who knew better, smiled. The law's delays were familiar to him. He was aware of many a pleasant little halting-place between writ and judgment. 'Never mind about that,' he answered, with a confident laugh. 'Shall I settle it for you? I shall know better, perhaps, what to say to them.'

The rector assented gladly; adding, 'Here is their address.' It was stuck in the corner of a picture hanging over the fireplace. He took it down as he spoke and gave it to Jack, who put it carelessly into his pocket, and, seizing his hat, said he must go at once—that it was close on twelve. The rector would have repeated his thanks, but Jack would not stop to hear them, and in a moment was gone.

Reginald Lindo returned to the study after letting him out, and, dropping into the nearest chair, looked round with a sigh. Yet, the sigh notwithstanding, he was less unhappy now than he had been at dinner or while looking over that number of 'Punch.' His friend's visit had both cheered and softened him. His thoughts no longer dwelt on the earl's injustice, the desertion of his friends, or the humiliations in store for him; but went back to the warning Kate Bonamy had given him. Thence it was not unnatural that they should revert to the beginning of his acquaintance with her. He pictured her at Oxford, he saw her scolding Daintry in the stiff drawing-room, he saw her coming to meet him in the Red Lane; and, the veil of local prejudice being torn from his eyes by the events of the day, he began to discern that Kate, with all the drawbacks of her surroundings, was the fairest and noblest girl he had met at Claversham, or, for aught he could remember, elsewhere. His eyes glistened. He felt sure that for all the earls in England she would not have deserted him!

He had reached this point, and Jack had been gone five minutes or more, when he was startled by a loud rap at the house door. He stood up and, wondering who it could be at that hour, took a candle and went into the hall. Setting the candlestick on a table, he opened the door, and there, to his astonishment, was Jack come back again!

'Ah, good!' said the barrister, slipping in and shutting the door behind him, as though his return were not in the least degree extraordinary, 'I thought it was you. Look here; there is one thing I forgot to ask you, Lindo. Where did you get the address of those lawyers?'

He asked the question so earnestly, and his face, now that it could be seen by the strong light of the candle at his elbow, wore so curious an expression, that the rector was for a moment quite taken aback. 'They are good people, are they not?' he asked, wondering much.

'Oh, yes, the firm is good enough,' Jack answered impatiently. 'But who gave you their address?'

'Clode,' the rector answered. 'I went round to his lodgings and he wrote it down for me.'

'At his lodgings?' the barrister exclaimed.

'Certainly.'

'You are quite sure it was at his lodgings?'

'I am quite sure.'

'Ah! then look here,' Jack replied, laying his hand on Lindo's sleeve and looking up at him with an air of peculiar seriousness—'just tell me once more, so that I may have no doubt about it. Are you sure that from the time you docketed those letters until now you have never removed them—from this house, I mean?'

'Never!'

'Never let them go out of the house?'

'Never!' the rector answered firmly. 'I am as certain of it as a man can be certain of anything.'

'Thanks!' Jack cried. 'All right. Good night.'

And that was all. In a twinkling he had the door open and was gone, leaving the rector to go to bed in such a state of mystification as made him almost forget his fallen fortunes.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE DAY AFTER.

THE rector did not expect to see Jack again for a time, and his first thought on rising next morning was of his curate. He had looked to see him, as we know, before bedtime. Disappointed in this, he still felt certain that the curate would hasten as soon as possible to offer his sympathy and assistance; and after breakfast he repaired to his study for the express purpose of receiving him. To find one friend in need is good, but to find two is better. The young clergyman felt, as people in trouble of a certain kind do feel, that though he had told Jack all about it, it would be a relief to tell Stephen all about it also; the more as Jack, whom he had told, was his personal friend, while Clode was identified with the place, and his unabated confidence and esteem—of retaining which the rector made no doubt—would go some way towards soothing the latter's wounded pride.

It was well, however, that Lindo, sitting down at his writing-table, found there some scattered notes upon which he could employ his thoughts, and which without any great concentration of mind he could form into a sermon. For otherwise his time would have been wasted. Ten o'clock came, and eleven, and half-past eleven; but no curate.

Mr. Clode, in fact, was engaged elsewhere. About half-past ten he turned briskly into the drive leading to Mrs. Hammond's house and walked up it at a good pace, with the step of a man who has news to tell, and is going to tell it. The morning was bright and sunny, the air crisp and fresh, yet not too cold. The gravel crunched pleasantly under his feet, while the hoar-frost melting on the dark-green leaves of the laurels bordered his path with a million gems as brilliant as evanescent. Possibly the pleasure he took in these things, possibly some thought of his own, lent animation to the curate's face and figure as he strode along. At any rate Miss Hammond, meeting him suddenly at a turn in the approach, saw a change in him, and, reading the signs aright, blushed.

'Well?' she said, smiling a question as she held out her hand. They had scarcely been alone together since the afternoon when the rector's inopportune call had brought about an understanding between them.

'Well?' he answered, retaining her hand. 'What is it, Laura?'

'I thought you were going to tell me,' she said, glancing up with shy assurance. The morning air was not fresher. She was so bright and piquant in her furs and with her dazzling complexion, that other eyes than her lover's might have been pardoned for likening her to the frost-drops on the laurels. At any rate, she sparkled as they did.

He looked down at her, fond admiration in his eyes. Had he not come up on purpose to see her? 'I think it is all right,' he said, in a slightly lower tone. 'I think I may answer for it, Laura, that we shall not have much longer to wait.'

She gazed at him, seeming for the moment startled and taken by surprise. 'Have you heard of a living, then?' she murmured, her eyes wide, her breath coming and going.

He nodded.

'Where?' she asked, in the same low tone. 'You do not mean—here?'

He nodded again.

'At Claversham!' she exclaimed. 'Then will Mr. Lindo have to go, do you think?'

'I think he will,' Clode answered, a glow of triumph warming his dark face and kindling his eyes. 'When Lord Dynmore left here yesterday he drove straight to Mr. Bonamy's. You hardly believe it, do you? Well, it is true, for I had it from a sure source. And, that being so, I do not think Lindo will have much chance against such an alliance. It is not as if he had many friends here, or had got on well with the people.'

'The poor people like him,' she urged.

'Yes,' Clode answered sharply. 'He has spent money amongst them. It was not his own, you see.'

It was a brutal thing to say, and she cast a glance of gentle reproof at him. She did not remonstrate, however, but, slightly changing the subject, asked, 'Still, if Mr. Lindo goes, you are not sure of the living?'

'I think so,' he answered, smiling confidently down at her.

She looked puzzled. 'How do you know?' she asked. 'Did Lord Dynmore promise it to you?'

'No; I wish he had,' he answered quickly. 'All the same, I think I am fairly sure of it without the promise.' And then he related to her what the archdeacon had told him as to Lord Dynmore's intention of presenting the curates in future. 'Now do you see, Laura?' he said.

'Yes, I see,' she answered, looking down, and absently poking a hole in the gravel with the point of her umbrella.

'And you are content?'

'Yes,' she answered, looking up brightly from a little dream of the rectory as it should be, when feminine taste had transformed it with the aid of Persian rugs and old china and the hundred knick-knacks which are half a woman's life—'Yes, I am content, Mr. Clode.'

'Say "Stephen."'

'I am content, Stephen,' she answered obediently, a bright blush for a moment mingling with her smile.

He was about to make some warm rejoinder, when the sound of footsteps approaching from the house diverted his attention, and he looked up. The new-comer was Mrs. Hammond, on her way into the town. She waved her hand to him. 'Good morning,' she cried in her cheery voice—'you are just the person I wanted to see, Mr. Clode. This is good luck. Now, how is he?'

'Who? Mrs. Hammond,' said the curate, taken off his guard.

'Who?' she replied, reproach in her tone. She was a kind-hearted woman, and the scene in her drawing-room had really cost her a few minutes' sleep. 'Why, Mr. Lindo, to be sure. Whom else should I mean? I suppose you went in last night at once and told him how much we all sympathised with him? Indeed, I hope you did not leave him until you saw him well to bed, for I am sure he was hardly fit to be left alone, poor fellow!'

Mr. Clode stood silent, and looked troubled. Really, if it had occurred to him, he would have called to see Lindo. But it had not occurred to him, after what had happened—perhaps because he had been busied about things which 'seemed worth while.' He regretted now that he had not done so, since Mrs. Hammond seemed to think it so much a matter of course; the more as the omission compelled him to choose his side earlier than he need have done. However, it was too late now. So he shook his head. 'I have not seen him, Mrs. Hammond,' he said gravely. 'I have not been to the rectory.'

'What! you have not seen him?' she cried in amazement.

'No, Mrs. Hammond, I have not,' he answered, a slight tinge of hauteur in his manner. After all, he reflected, he would have found it painful to play another part before Laura after disclosing so much of his mind to her. 'What is more, Mrs. Hammond,' he continued, 'I am not anxious to see him; for, to tell you the truth, I fear that the meeting could only be a painful one.'

'Why, you do not mean to say,' the lady answered in a low, awe-stricken voice, 'that you think he knew anything about it, Mr. Clode?'

'At any rate,' the curate replied firmly, 'I cannot acquit him.'

'Not acquit him! Not acquit Mr. Lindo!' she stammered.

'No, I cannot,' Clode replied, striving to express in his voice and manner his extreme conscientiousness and the gloomy sense of responsibility under which he had arrived at his decision. 'I cannot get out of my head,' he continued gravely, 'Lord Dynmore's remark that, if the circumstances aroused suspicion in my mind, they could scarcely fail to apprise Mr. Lindo, who was more nearly concerned, of the truth, or something like the truth. Mind!' the curate added with a great show of candour, 'I do not say, Mrs. Hammond, that Mr. Lindo knew. I only say I think he suspected.'

'Well, *that* is very good of you!' Mrs. Hammond exclaimed, with a spirit and a power of sarcasm he had not expected. 'I daresay Mr. Lindo will be much obliged to you for *that*! But, for my part, I think it is a distinction without a difference!' And she nodded her head two or three times in great excitement.

'Oh, no!' the curate protested hastily.

'Well, I think it is, at any rate!' retorted the lady, very red in the face, and with all the bugles in her bonnet shaking. 'However, everyone to his opinion. But that is not mine, and I am sorry it is yours. Why, you are his curate!' she added in a tone of indignant wonder, which brought the blood to Clode's cheeks, and made him bite his lip in impotent anger. 'You ought to be the last person to doubt him!'

'Can I help it if I do?' he answered sullenly.

An angry reply was on Mrs. Hammond's lips, but her daughter intercepted it. 'Mother,' she said hurriedly, 'if Mr. Clode thinks in that way, can he be blamed for telling us? We are not the town. What he has told us he has told us in confidence.'

'A confidence Mrs. Hammond has made me bitterly regret,' he rejoined, taking skilful advantage of the intervention.

Mrs. Hammond grunted. She was still angry, but she felt herself baffled. 'Well, I do not understand these things, perhaps,' she said. 'But I do not agree with Mr. Clode, and I am not going to pretend to.'

'I am sure he does not wish you to,' said Laura sweetly. 'Only you did not quite understand, I think, that he was only giving us his private opinion. Of course he would not tell it to the town.'

'Well, that makes a difference, of course,' Mrs. Hammond allowed. 'But now I will say good-morning! For myself, I shall go straight to the rectory and inquire. Are you coming, Laura?'

Laura hesitated a moment, but she thought it prudent to go, and, with a bright little nod, she tripped after her mother. Mr. Clode, thus deserted, walked slowly down the drive, and wondered whether he had been premature in his revolt. He did not think so; and yet he wished he had not been so hasty—that he had not shown his hand quite so early. He had been a little carried away by the events of the previous afternoon. Even now, however, the more he thought of it, the more hopeless seemed the rector's position. Openly denounced by his patron as an impostor, at war with his churchwarden, disliked by a powerful section of the

parish, one action already commenced against him and another threatened—what else could he do but resign? 'He may say he will not, to-day and to-morrow,' the curate thought, smiling darkly to himself; 'but they will be too much for him the day after.'

And whether Mr. Clode told this opinion of his in the town or not, it was certainly a very common one. Never had Claversham been treated to such a dish of gossip as this. On the evening of the bazaar, before the unsold goods had been cleared from the tables, the wildest rumours were already afloat in the town. The rector had been arrested; he had decamped; he was to be tried for fraud; he was not in holy orders at all; Mrs. Bedford would have to be married over again! With the morning these reports died away, and something like the truth came to be known—to the inexpressible satisfaction of Dr. Gregg and his like. The doctor was in and out of half the houses in the town that day. 'Resign!' he would say with a shriek—'of course he will resign! And glad to escape so easily!' Dr. Gregg, indeed, was in his glory now. The parts were reversed. It was for him now to meet the rector with a patronising nod; only, for some reason best known to himself, and perhaps arising from a subtle difference between the two men, he preferred to celebrate his triumph figuratively, and behind Lindo's back.

What was said, and how it was said, can easily be imagined. When a man, who for some cause has held his head a little above his neighbours, stumbles and falls, we know what is likely to be said of him. And the young rector knew, and in his heart and in his study suffered horribly. All the afternoon of the day after the bazaar he walked the town with a smile on his face, ostensibly visiting in his district, really vindicating his pride and courage. He carried his head as high as ever, and the skirts of his long black coat fluttered as bravely as before. Dr. Gregg, who saw him from the Reading-room window, gave it as his opinion that he did not know what shame meant. But at heart the young man was very miserable. He knew that inquisitive eyes were upon his every gesture; that he was watched, jeered at, worst of all—pitied. He guessed, as the day wore on, drawing the inference from the curate's avoidance of him, that even Clode had deserted him. And this, perhaps, almost as much as the resentment he harboured against Lord Dynmore, hardened him in his resolve not to resign or abate one tittle of his rights.

He fancied he stood alone. But, of course, there were some

who sympathised with him, and some who held their tongues and declined to commit themselves to any opinion. Among the latter Mr. Bonamy was conspicuous, much to the disgust of Dr. Gregg, whose first expression on hearing the news had been, 'What nuts for Bonamy!' As a fact, the snappish little doctor had never found his friend so morose and unpleasant as when he tried to sound him on this subject. He first espied him on the other side of the street, and rushed across, stuttering, almost before he reached him, 'Well? He will have to resign, won't he?'

'Who?' Mr. Bonamy said, standing still, and fixing his cold grey eyes on the excited little man. 'Who will have to resign?'

'Why, the rector, to be sure!' rejoined Gregg, feeling the check unpleasantly.

'Will he?'

'Well, I should say so,' urged the doctor, now quite taken aback, and gazing at the other with eyes of surprise. 'But I suppose you know best, Bonamy.'

'Then I am going to keep my knowledge to myself!' snarled the lawyer. And, rattling a handful of silver in his pocket, he stalked away, his hat on the back of his head, and his lank figure more ungainly than usual. In truth, he was in a very bad temper. He was angry with Lord Dynmore and dissatisfied with himself; given, indeed, to calling himself, half-a-dozen times in an hour, a quixotic fool for having thrown away the earl's business for the sake of a scruple which was little more than a whim. It is all very well to have a queer rugged code of honour of one's own, and to observe it. But when the observance sends away business—such business as brings with it the social consideration which men prize most highly when they most affect to despise it—why then a man is apt to take out his self-denial in ill-temper. Mr. Bonamy did so.

So Dr. Gregg went away calling the lawyer a bear, and an ill-bred fellow who did not know his own friends. Alas! the same thing might have been said, and with greater justice, of the rector. The archdeacon sat an hour in the rectory study, waiting patiently for him to return from his district, and after all got but a sorry reception. The elder man expressed, and expressed very warmly—he had come to do so—his full belief in Lindo's honesty and good faith, and was greatly touched by the effect his words produced upon the young fellow; who had come into the room, on learning his visitor's presence, with set lips and eyes of

challenge, but had by-and-by to turn his back and look out of the window, while in a very low tone he murmured his thanks. But, alas! the archdeacon went farther than sympathy. He let drop something about concession, and then the boat was over!

'Concession!' said the young man, turning as on a pivot, with every hair of his head bristling, and his voice clear enough now. 'What kind of concession do you mean?'

'Well,' said the archdeacon persuasively, 'the earl is a choleric man—a most passionate man, I know; and, when excited, utterly foolish and wrong-headed. But in his cooler moments I do not know anyone more just or, indeed, more generous. I feel sure that if you could prevail on yourself to meet him half-way——'

'To meet him half-way? By resigning, do you mean?' snapped the rector, interrupting him point-blank with the question.

'Oh, no, no,' said the archdeacon, 'I do not mean that.'

'Then in what way? How?'

But as the archdeacon really meant by resigning, he could not answer the question. And the interview ended in Lindo roundly stating his views, as he walked up and down the room, 'I will not resign!' he declared. 'Understand that, archdeacon! I will not resign! If Lord Dynmore can put me out, well and good—let him. If not, I stay. He may be just or generous,' the young man continued scornfully—'all I know is that he insulted me grossly, and as no gentleman would have insulted another.'

'He is passionate, and was taken by surprise,' the archdeacon ventured to say. But the words were wasted, Lindo would not listen; and his visitor had presently to go, fearing that he had done more harm than good by his mediation. As for the rector, he was severely scolded later in the evening by Jack Smith for having omitted to lay the letters offering him the living before the archdeacon, or to explain to him the precise circumstances under which he had accepted it.

'But he said he did not doubt me,' the rector urged rather fractiously.

'Pooh! that is not the point,' the barrister retorted. 'Of course he does not. He knows you. But I want you to put him in possession of such a case as he may lay before others who do not know you. Look here, you are acquainted with a man called Felton, are you not?'

'Yes,' Lindo answered, with a slight start.

'Well, perhaps you are not aware that he has been to Lord Dynmore—so the tale runs in the town, and I know it is true—and stated that you have been for weeks bribing him to keep the secret.'

The rector sat motionless, staring at his friend. 'I did not know it,' he said at last, quite quietly. He was becoming accustomed to surprises of this kind. 'It is a wicked lie, of course.'

'Of course,' Jack assented, tossing one leg easily over the other, and thrusting his hands deep into his trousers pockets. 'But what do you say to it?'

'The man came to me,' Lindo explained, 'and told me that he was Lord Dynmore's servant, and that, crossing from America, he had foolishly lost his money at play. He begged me to assist him until Lord Dynmore's return, and I did so. Some ten days ago I discovered that he was leading a disreputable life, and I stopped the allowance.'

'Thanks,' Jack answered, nodding his head. 'That is precisely what I thought. But the mischief of it is, you see, that the man's tale may be true in his eyes. He may believe that he was blackmailing you. And therefore, since we cannot absolutely refute his story, it is the more important that we should show as good a case as possible *aliunde*. Nor does it make any difference,' Jack continued drily, 'that the man, after seeing Lord Dynmore last night, has taken himself off this morning.'

'What! Felton?' the rector exclaimed, coming suddenly upright.

'Yes. There is no doubt he has absconded. Bonamy's clerk has been after him all day, and has discovered that he begged half-a-crown from your curate, to whom he was seen speaking at the Top of the Town about ten this morning. Since that time he has not been seen.'

'He may turn up yet,' said the rector.

'I do not think he will,' the barrister replied, with a shrewd gleam in his eyes. 'But you must not flatter yourself that his disappearance will do you any good. Of course some people will say that he was afraid to remain and support a false statement. But more, I fear, will lean to the opinion that he was got out of the way by some one—you, for instance.'

'I see,' said Lindo slowly, after a long pause. 'Then it is the more imperative that I should not dream of resigning.'

'Certainly,' said Jack. 'It would be madness.'

CHAPTER XX.

A SUDDEN CALL.

DAINTRY was sitting in the dining-room a few mornings after the bazaar. She looked up from her Ollendorf, as her sister entered the room about some housekeeping matter; and, more for the sake of wasting a moment than for any other reason, attacked her. 'Kate,' she said with a yawn, 'are you never going to see old Peggy Jones again? I am sure that you have not been near her for a fortnight?'

'I ought to go, I know,' Kate answered, pausing by the sideboard, with a big bunch of keys dangling from her fingers and an absent expression in her grey eyes. 'I have not been for some time.'

'I should think you had not!' Daintry retorted with severity. 'You have hardly been out of the house the last four days.'

A faint colour stole into the elder girl's face, and, seeming suddenly to recollect what she wanted, she turned and began to search in the drawer behind her. She knew quite well that what Daintry said was true—that she had not been out for four days. Jack had delivered the rector's message to her, and she had listened with downcast eyes and grave composure—a composure so perfect that even the messenger who held the clue in his hand was almost deceived by it. All the same, it had made her very happy. The young rector appreciated at last the motive which had led her to give him that strange warning. He was grateful to her, and anxious to make her understand his gratitude. And while she dwelt on this with pleasure, she foresaw with a strange mingling of joy and fear, of anticipation and shrinking, that the first time she met him abroad he would strive to make it still more clear to her.

So for four days, lest she should seem even to herself to be precipitating the meeting, she had refrained from going out. Now, when Daintry remarked upon the change in her habits, she blushed at the thought that she might all the time have been exaggerating a trifle; and, though she did not go out at once, in the course of the afternoon she did issue forth, and called upon old Peggy. Coming back she had to pass through the churchyard, and there, on the very spot where she had once forced herself to address him, she met the rector.

She saw him while he was still some way off, and before he saw

her, and she looked eagerly for any trace of the trouble of the last few days. It had not changed him, outwardly, at any rate. It had rather accentuated him, she thought. He looked more boyish, more impetuous, more independent than ever, as he came swinging along, his blonde head thrown back, his eyes roving this way and that, his long skirts flapping behind him. Of defeat or humiliation he betrayed not a trace; and the girl wondered, seeing him so calm and strong, if he had really sent her that message—which seemed to have come from a man hard pressed.

A glance told her all this; and then he saw her, and, a flash of recognition sweeping across his face, quickened his steps to meet her. He seemed to be shaking hands with her before he had well considered what he would say, for when he had gone through that ceremony, and wished her 'Good morning,' he stood awkwardly silent. Then he murmured hurriedly, 'I have been waiting for some time to speak to you, Miss Bonamy.'

'Indeed?' she said calmly. She wondered at her own self-control.

'Yes,' he answered, his colour rising. 'And I could not have met you in a better place.'

'Why?' she asked. As if she did not know. The simplest woman is an actress by nature.

'Because,' he answered, 'it is well that I should do penance where I sinned. Miss Bonamy,' he continued impetuously, yet in a low voice, and with his eyes on the ground, 'I owe you a deep apology for my rude thanklessness when I met you here last. You were right and I was wrong; but if it had been the other way, still I ought not to have behaved to you as I did. I thought—that is—I——'

He faltered and stopped. He meant that he had thought that she was playing into her father's hands, but he could hardly tell her that. She understood, however, or guessed, and for the first time she blushed. 'Pray, do not say any more about it,' she said hurriedly.

'I did send you a message,' he answered.

'Oh, yes, yes,' she replied, anxious only to put an end to his apologies. 'Please think no more about it.'

'Well,' he rejoined with a smile which did not completely veil his earnestness, 'I do find it a little more pleasant to look farther back—to our Oxford visit. But you are going this way. May I turn with you?'

'I am only going home,' Kate answered coldly. He had been humble enough to her. He had said and looked all she had expected. But he was not at all the crushed, beaten man whom she had looked to meet. He was, outwardly at least, the same man who had once sought her society for a few weeks and had then slighted her and shunned her, that he might consort with the Homfrays and their class. He had not said he was sorry for *that*.

He read her tone aright, and coloured furiously, growing a thousand times more confused than before. It was on the cards that he would accept the rebuff, and leave her. Indeed, that was his first impulse. But the consciousness, which the next moment filled his mind, that he had deserved this, and perhaps the charm of her grey eyes, overcame him. 'I will come a little way with you, if you will let me,' he said, turning and walking by her side.

Kate's heart gave a great leap. She understood both the first thought and the second, the weaker impulse and the stronger one which mastered it, and she would not have been a woman had she not felt her triumph. She hastened to find something to say, and could think only of the bazaar. She asked him if it had been a success.

'The bazaar?' he answered. 'To tell you the truth, I am afraid I hardly know. I should say so, now you ask me, but I have not given much thought to it since. I have been too fully occupied with other things,' he added, a note of bitterness in his voice. 'Ah! Miss Bonamy,' with a fresh change of tone, 'what a good fellow your cousin is!'

'Yes, he is indeed!' she answered heartily.

'I cannot tell you,' he continued, 'what generous help and support he has given me during the last few days. He has been of the greatest possible comfort to me.'

She looked up at him impulsively. 'He is Daintry's hero,' she said.

'Yes,' he answered laughing, 'I remember that her praise made me almost jealous of him. That was when I first knew you—when I was coming to Claversham, you remember, Miss Bonamy, full of pleasant anticipations. The reality has been different. Jack has told you, of course, of Lord Dynmore's strange attack upon me? But perhaps,' he added, checking himself, and glancing at her, 'I ought not to speak to you about it, as your father is acting for him.'

'I do not think he is,' she murmured, looking straight before her.

'But—it is true the only communication I have had has been from London—still I thought—I mean I was under the impression that Lord Dynmore had at once gone to your father.'

'I think he saw him at the office,' Kate answered, 'but I believe my father is not acting for him.'

'Do you know why?' asked the rector bluntly. 'Why he is not, I mean?'

'No,' she said—that and nothing more. She was too proud to defend her father, though he had let drop enough in the family circle to enable her to form her own conclusions, and she might have made out a story which would have set the lawyer in a light differing much from that in which the rector was accustomed to view him.

Reginald Lindo walked on considering the matter. Suddenly he said, 'The archdeacon thinks I ought to resign. What do you think, Miss Bonamy?'

Her heart began to beat quickly, and with good cause. He was seeking her advice! He was asking her opinion in this matter so utterly important to him, so absolutely vital! For a moment she could not speak, she was so filled with surprise. Then she said gently, her eyes on the pavement, 'I do not think I can judge.'

'But you must have heard—more I dare say than I have!' he rejoined with a forced laugh. 'Will you tell me what you think?'

She looked before her, her face troubled. Then she spoke bravely.

'I think you should judge for yourself,' she said in a low tone, full of serious feeling. 'The responsibility is yours, Mr. Lindo. I do not think that you should depend entirely on anyone's advice. I mean, you should try to do right according to your conscience—not acting hastily, but coolly, and on reflection.'

They were almost at Mr. Bonamy's door when she said this, and he traversed the remainder of the distance without speaking. At the steps he halted and held out his hand. 'Thank you,' he said simply, his eyes seeking hers for a moment and dwelling on them, a steady light in their gaze. 'I hope I shall use this advice to better purpose than the last you gave me. Good-bye.'

She bowed silently, and went in, her heart full of strange

rapture, and he turned back and walked up the street. The dusk was falling. A few yards in front of him the lame lamplighter was going his rounds, ladder on shoulder. In many of the shops the gas was beginning to gleam. The night was coming, was almost come, yet still above the houses the sky, a pale greenish blue, was bright with daylight, against which the great tower of the church stood up bulky and black. The young man was in a curious mood. Though he walked the common pavement, he felt himself, as he gazed upwards, alone with his thoughts which went back, whether he would or no, to his first evening in Claversham. He remembered how free from reproach or stumbling-blocks his path had seemed then, to what blameless ends he had in fancy devoted himself. What works of thanksgiving, small but beneficent as the tiny rills which steal downwards through the ferns to the pasture, he had planned. And in the centre of that past dream of the future he pictured now—Kate Bonamy. Well, the reality was different.

He was just beginning to wonder when he would be likely to meet her again, and to dwell with idle pleasure on some of the details of her dress and appearance, when the sudden clatter of hoofs behind him caused him to turn his head. Far down the steep street a rider had turned the corner, and was galloping up the middle of the roadway, the manner in which he urged on his pony seeming to proclaim disaster and ill news. Opposite the rector he pulled up and cried out, 'Where is the doctor's, sir?'

Lindo turned sharply round and rang the bell of the house behind him, which happened to be Gregg's. 'Here,' he said briefly. 'What is it, my man?'

'An explosion in the Big Pit at Baerton,' the man replied. He was almost blubbering with excitement and the speed at which he had come. 'There is like to be fifty killed and as many hurt, I was told,' he continued; 'but I came straight off.'

'Good heavens! when did it happen?' Lindo asked, a wave of wild excitement following his first impulse of horror.

'About an hour and a quarter ago, as near as I can say,' the messenger answered. He was merely a farm-labourer called from the plough.

Dr. Gregg was out, and the clergyman walked by the side of the horseman, a crowd gathering behind him as the news spread, to the house of Mr. Keogh, the other doctor, who fortunately lived

close by. He was at home, and, the messenger going in to tell him the particulars, in five minutes he had his gig at the door. The rector, who had gone in too, came out with him, and, without asking leave, climbed to the seat beside him.

'What is this?' said the surgeon, turning to him sharply. He was an elderly man, stout and white-haired. 'Are you coming, too, Mr. Lindo?'

'I think so,' the rector answered. 'There may be cases in which you can do little and I much. Mr. Walker, the vicar of Baerton, is ill in bed, I know; and as the news has come to me first, I think I ought to go.'

'Right you are!' said Mr. Keogh gruffly, yet with a shrug of the shoulders. 'Let go!'

In another moment the fast-trotting cob was whirling the two men down the street. They turned the corner sharply, and as the breeze met them on the bridge, compelling Lindo to turn up the collar of his coat and draw the rug more closely round him, the church clock in the town behind them struck the half-hour. 'Half-past five,' said the rector. The surgeon did not answer. They were in the open country now, the hedges speeding swiftly by them in the light of the lamps, and the long outline of Baer Hill, a huge misshapen hump which rose into a point at one end, lying dim and black before them. A night drive is always impressive. In the gloom, in the sough of the wind, in the sky serenely star-lit, or a tumult of hurrying clouds, in the rattle of the wheels, in the monotonous fall of the hoofs, there is an appeal to the sombre side of man. How much more is this the case when the sough of the wind seems to the imagination a cry of pain, and the night is a dark background on which the fancy paints dying faces! At such a time the cares of life, which day by day rise one beyond another and prevent us dwelling overmuch on the end, sink into pettiness, leaving us face to face with weightier issues.

'There have been accidents here before?' the clergyman asked, after a long silence.

'Thirty-five years ago there was one!' his companion answered, with a groan which betrayed his apprehensions. 'Good heavens, sir, I remember it now! I was young then and fresh from the hospitals; but it was almost too much for me!'

'I hope that this one has been exaggerated,' Lindo replied, entering fully into the other's feelings. 'I did not quite under-

stand the man's account; but, as far as I could follow it, one of the two shafts—the downcast shaft I think he said—was choked by the explosion, and rendered quite useless.'

'Just what I expected!' ejaculated his companion.

'So that they could only reach the workings through the upcast shaft, in which they had rigged up some temporary lifting gear.'

'Ay, and it is the deepest pit here,' the surgeon chimed in, as the horse began to breast the steeper part of the ascent, and the furnace fires, before and above them, began to flicker and glow, now sinking into darkness, now flaming up like beacon-lights. 'The workings are two thousand feet below the surface, man!'

'Stop!' Lindo said. 'Here is some one looking for us, I think.'

Two women with shawls over their heads came to the side of the gig. 'Be you the doctors?' one of them said, peering in. Keogh answered that they were, and then in another minute the two were following her up the side of the cutting which here confined the road. The hillside gained, they were hurried through the darkness round pit-banks and slag-heaps, and under cranes and ruinous sinking walls, and over and under mysterious obstacles, sometimes looming large in the gloom and sometimes lying unseen at their feet—until they emerged at length with startling abruptness into a large circle of dazzling light. Four great fires were burning close together, and round them, motionless and for the most part silent, in appearance almost apathetic, stood hundreds of dark shadows—men and women waiting for news.

The silence and inaction of so large a crowd struck a chill to Lindo's heart. A tremor ran through him as he advanced with his companion towards a knot of a dozen rough fellows who stood together, some half-stripped, some muffled up in pilot-jackets or coarse shiny clothes. The crowd seemed to be watching them, and they spoke now and then to one another in a desultory expectant fashion, from which he judged they were persons in authority.

'It is a bad job—a very bad job!' his companion the doctor was saying nervously, when his attention, which had strayed for a moment, returned to its duty. 'Is there anything I can do yet?'

'Well, that depends, doctor,' answered one of the men, whose manner of speaking proved that he was not a mere working collier. 'There is no one up yet,' he explained, eyeing the doctor dubiously. 'But it does not exactly follow that you can do nothing. Some of us have just come up, and there is a shift of

men exploring down there now. Three bodies have been recovered, and they are at the foot of the shaft; and three poor fellows have been found alive, of whom one has since died. The other two are within fifty yards of the shaft, and as comfortable as we can make them. But they are bad—too bad to come up in a bucket; and we can rig up nothing bigger at present, so there they are fixed. The question is, will you go down to them?'

Mr. Keogh's face fell. He shook his head. He was no longer young, and to descend a sheer depth of six hundred yards in a bucket dangling at the end of a makeshift rope was not in his line. 'No, thank you,' he said, 'I could not do it, indeed.'

'Come, doctor,' the man persisted—he was the manager of a neighbouring colliery, as Lindo learned afterwards, 'you will be there in no time.'

'Just so,' said the surgeon dryly. 'I have no doubt I should go down fast enough. It is the coming back is the rub, you see, Mr. Peat. No, thank you, I could not.'

But the other still urged him. 'These poor fellows are about as bad as they can be, and you know if the mountain will not go to Mahomet, Mahomet must go to the mountain.'

'I know; and if it were a mountain, well and good,' Mr. Keogh answered, smiling in sickly fashion as his eye strayed to a black well-like hole close at hand—a mere hole in some loose planks surmounted by a windlass and fringed with ugly wreckage. 'But it is not. It is quite the other thing, you see.'

Mr. Peat shrugged his shoulders, and glanced at his companions rather in sorrow than surprise. Lindo, standing behind the doctor, saw the look. Till then he had stood silent. Now he pressed forward. 'Did I hear you say that one of the injured men died after he was found?' he asked.

'Yes, that is so,' the manager answered, looking keenly at him, and wondering who he was.

'The others who are hurt—are their lives in danger?'

'I am afraid so,' the man replied reluctantly.

'Then I have a right to be with them,' the rector answered quickly. 'I am a clergyman, and I have hastened here, fearing this might be the case. But I have also attended an ambulance class, and I can dress a burn. Besides, I am a younger man than our friend here, and, if you will let me down, I will go.'

'By George, sir!' the manager exclaimed, looking round for approval and smiting his thigh heavily, 'you are a man as well as

a parson, and down you shall go, and thank you! You may make the men more comfortable, and any way you will put heart into them, for you have some to spare yourself. As for danger, there is none!—Jack!'—this in a louder voice to some one in the background—'just twitch that rope! And get that tub up, will you? Look slippery now.'

Lindo felt a hand on his arm, and, obeying the silent gesture of the nearest gaunt figure, stepped aside. In a twinkling the man stripped off the parson's long coat and put on him the pilot-jacket from his own shoulders; a second man gave him a peaked cap of stiff leather in place of his soft hat; and a third fastened a pit-lamp round his neck, explaining to him how to raise the wick without unlocking the lamp, and showing him that, if it swung too much on one side or were upset, its flame would expire of itself. And upon one thing Lindo was never tired of dwelling afterwards—the kindly tact of these rough men, and how by seemingly casual words, and even touches, the roughest sought to encourage him, while ignoring the possibility of his feeling alarm.

Meanwhile Mr. Keogh, standing in a state of considerable perplexity and discomfiture where the rector had left him, heard a well-known voice at his elbow, and turned to find that Gregg had arrived. The younger doctor was not the man to be awed into silence, and, as he came up, was speaking loudly. 'Hallo, Mr. Keogh!' he said. 'I heard you were before me. Have you got them all in hand? Cuts or burns mostly, eh?'

'They are not above ground yet,' Mr. Keogh answered. He and Gregg were not on speaking terms, but such an emergency as this was allowed to override their estrangement.

'Oh, then we shall have to wait,' Gregg answered, looking round on the scene with a mixture of curiosity and professional *aplomb*. 'I wish I had spared my horse. Any other medical man here?'

'No; and they want one of us to go down in the bucket,' Keogh explained. 'There are some injured men at the foot of the shaft. I have a wife and children, and I thought that perhaps you——'

'Would not mind breaking my neck!' Gregg retorted with decision. 'No, thank you, not for me! I hope to have a wife and children some day, and I will keep my neck for them. Go down!' he repeated, looking round with extreme scorn. 'Pooh! No one can expect us to do it! It is these people's business, and

they are used to it; but there is not a sane man in the kingdom, besides, would go down that place after what has just happened. It is a quarter of a mile as a stone falls, if it is an inch!'

'It is all that,' the other assented, feeling much relieved.

'And a height makes me giddy,' Dr. Gregg added.

'I feel the same of late,' said his elder.

'No, every man to his trade,' Gregg concluded, settling the matter to his satisfaction. 'Let them bring them up, and we will doctor them. But while they are below ground—— Hallo! Who is this?'

The next moment he uttered an oath of surprise and anger. As his eye wandered round, it had lit on Lindo coming forward to the shaft; and the doctor recognised him in spite of his disguise. One look, and Gregg would cheerfully have given ten pounds either to have had the rector away, or to have arrived a little later himself. He had calculated in his own mind that, if no outsider went down, he could scarcely be blamed for taking care of himself. But, if the rector went down, the matter would wear a different aspect. And Dr. Gregg saw this so clearly that he turned pale with rage and chagrin, and swore again under his breath.

CHAPTER XXI.

IN PROFUNDIS.

THE young clergyman's face, as he walked forward to the shaft, formed, if the truth be told, no index to his mind. For, while it remained calm and even wore a faint smile, he was inwardly conscious of a strong desire to take hold of anything which presented itself, even a straw. Nevertheless, he stepped gravely into the tub, amid a low murmur; and, clutching the iron bar above it, felt himself at a word of command lifted gently into the air, and swung over the shaft. For an uncomfortable five seconds or so he remained stationary; then there was a jerk—another—and the dark figures, the line of faces, and the glare of the fires leapt suddenly above his head. He found himself in darkness dropping through space with a swift, sickening motion, as of one falling away from himself. His heart rose into his throat. There was a loud buzzing in his ears, and still above this he heard the dull rattling sound of the rope being paid out. Every other

sense was spent in the stern grip of his hands on the bar above his head.

The horrible sensation of falling lasted for a few seconds only. It passed away. He was no longer in space with nothing stable about him, but in a small tub at the end of a tough rope. Except for a slight swaying motion, he hardly knew that he was still descending; and presently a faint light, more diffused than his own lamp, grew visible. Then he came gently to a standstill, and some one held up a lantern to his face. With difficulty he made out two huge figures standing beside him, who laid hold of the tub and pulled it towards them until it rested on something solid. 'You are welcome,' one growled, as, aided by a hand of each, Lindo stepped out. 'You will be the doctor, I suppose, master? Well, this way. Catch hold of my jacket.'

Lindo obeyed, being only too glad of the help thus given him; for though the men seemed to move about with ease and certainty, he could make out nothing but shapeless gloom. 'Now you sit right down there,' continued the collier, when they had walked a few yards, 'and you will get the sight of your eyes in a bit.'

He did as he was bid; and one by one the objects about him became visible. His first feeling was one of astonishment. He had put a quarter of a mile of solid earth between himself and the sunlight, and still, for all he could see, he might be merely in a cellar under a street. He found himself seated on a rough bench, in a low-roofed, windowless, wooden cabin, strangely resembling a very dirty London office in a fog. True, everything was black—very black. On another bench, opposite him, sat the two colliers who had received him, their lamps between their knees. His first impulse was to tell them hurriedly that he was not the doctor. 'I am afraid you are disappointed,' he added, 'but I hope one will follow me down. I am a clergyman, and I want to do something for these poor fellows, if you will take me to them.'

The two men betrayed no surprise, but he who had spoken before quietly poked up the wick of his lamp and held the lantern up so as to get a good view of his face. 'Ay, ay,' he said, nodding, as he lowered it again. 'I thought you weren't unbeknown to me. You are the parson we fetched to poor Jim Lucas a while ago. Well, Jim will have a rare cageful of his friends with him to-night.'

The rector shuddered. Such apathy, such matter-of-factness was new to him. But though his heart sank as the collier rose and, swinging his lamp in his hand, passed through the doorway,

he made haste to follow him; and the man's next words, 'You had best look to your steps, master, for there is a deal of rubbish come down'—pointing as they did to a material danger—brought him, in the diversion of his thoughts, something like relief.

The road on which he found himself, being the main heading or highway of the pit, was a good and wide one. It was even possible to stand upright in it. Here and there, however, it was partially blocked by falls of coal caused by the explosion, and over one of these his guide put out his hand to assist him. Lindo's lamp was by this time burning low. The pitman silently took it and raised the wick, a grim smile distorting his face as he handed it back. 'You will be about the first of the gentry,' he muttered, 'as has been down this pit without paying his footing.'

Lindo took the words for a hint, and was shocked by the man's insensibility. 'My good fellow,' he answered, 'if that is all, you shall have what you like another time. But for heaven's sake let us think of these poor fellows now.'

The man turned on him suddenly and swore aloud. 'Do you think I meant that?' he cried, with another violent oath.

The rector recoiled, not at the sound of the man's profanity, but in disgust at his own mistake. Then he held out his hand. 'My man,' he said, 'I beg your pardon. It was I who was wrong. I did not understand you.'

The giant looked at him with another stare, but made no answer, and a dozen steps brought them to a second cabin. Across the doorway—there was no door—hung a rough curtain of matting. This the man raised, and, holding his lamp over the threshold, invited the rector to look in. 'I guess,' he added significantly, 'that you would not have made that mistake, master, after seeing this.'

Lindo peered in. On the floor, which was little more than six feet square, lay four quiet figures, motionless, and covered with coarse sacking. No eye falling on them could take them for anything but what they were. The visitor shuddered, as his guide let the curtain fall again, muttering, with a backward jerk of the head, 'Two of them I came down with this morning—in the cage.'

The rector had nothing to answer, and the man, preceding him to a cabin a few yards farther on, invited him by a sign to enter, and himself turned back the way they had come. A faint moaning warned Lindo, before he raised the matting, what he must

expect to see. Instinctively, as he stepped in, his eyes sought the floor; and although three pitmen crouching upon one of the benches rose and made way for him, he hardly noticed them, so occupied was he with pitiful looking at the two men lying on coarse beds on the floor. They were bandaged and muffled almost out of human form. One of them was rolling his sightless face monotonously to and fro, pouring out an unceasing stream of delirious talk. The other, whose bright eyes met the newcomer's with eager longing, paused in the murmur which seemed to ease his pain, and whispered, 'Doctor!' so hopefully that the sound went straight to Lindo's heart.

To undeceive him, and to explain to the others that he was not the expected surgeon, was a bitter task with which to begin his ministrations; but he was greatly cheered to find that, even in their disappointment, they took his coming as a kindly thing, and eyed him with surprised gratitude. He told them the latest news from the bank—that a cage would be rigged up in a few hours at farthest—and then, conquering his physical shrinking, he knelt down by the least injured man and tried to turn his surgical knowledge to account. It was not much he could do, but it eased the poor man's present sufferings. A bandage was laid more smoothly here, a little cotton-wool readjusted there, a change of posture managed, a few hopeful words uttered which helped the patient to fight against the shock—so that presently he sank into a troubled sleep. Lindo tried to do his best for the other also, terrible as was the task; but the man's excitement and unceasing restlessness, as well as his more serious injuries, made help here of little avail.

When he rose, he found one of the watchers holding a cup of brandy ready for him; and, sitting down upon the bench behind, he discovered a coat laid there to make the seat more comfortable, though no one seemed to have done it, or to be conscious of his surprise. They talked low to him, and to one another, in a disjointed taciturn fashion, with immense gaps and long intervals of silence. He learned that there were twenty-seven men yet missing, but it was thought that the afterdamp had killed them all. Those already found alive had been in the main heading, where the current of air gave them a better chance.

One or other of the workers was continually going out to listen for the return of the party who were exploring the workings near the foot of the other shaft; and once or twice

a member of this party, exhausted or ill, looked in for a dose of tea or brandy, and then stumbled out again to get himself conveyed to the upper air. These looked curiously at the stranger, but, on some information being muttered in their ears, made a point on going out of giving him a nod which was full of tacit acknowledgment.

In a quiet interval he looked at his watch and wound it up, finding the time to be half-past two. The familiar action carried his mind back to his neat spotless bedroom at the rectory and the cares and anxieties of everyday life, which had been forgotten for the last five hours. Could it be so short a time, he asked himself, since he was troubled by them? It seemed years ago. It seemed as if a gulf, deep as the shaft down which he had come, divided him from them. And yet the moment his thoughts returned to them the gulf became less, and presently, although his eyes were still fixed upon the poor collier's unquiet head and the murky cabin with its smoky lamp, he was really back in Claversham, busied with those thoughts again, and pondering on the time when he should be above ground. The things that had been important before rose into importance again, but their relative values were altered, in his eyes at any rate. With what he had seen and heard in the last few hours fresh in his mind, with the injured men lying still in his sight—one of them never to see the sun again—he could not but take a different, a wider, a less selfish view of life and its aims. His ideal of existence grew higher and purer, his notion of success more noble. In the light of his own self-forgetting energy and of others' pain he saw things as they affected his neighbour rather than himself; and so presently—not in haste, but slowly, in the watches of the night—he formed a resolution which shall be told presently. The determinations to which men come at such times are, in nine cases out of ten, as transitory as the emotions on which they are based. But this time, and with this man, it was not to be so. Kate Bonamy's words, bringing before his mind the responsibility which rested upon him, had in a degree prepared him to examine his position gravely and from a lofty standpoint; so that the considerations which now occurred to him could scarcely fail to have due and lasting weight with him, and to leave impressions both deep and permanent.

He was presently roused from his reverie by a sound which caused his companions to rise to their feet and exhibit, for the

first time, some excitement. It was the murmur of voices in the heading, which, beginning far away, rapidly approached and gathered strength. Going to the door of the cabin, he saw lights in the gallery becoming each instant more clear. Then the forms of men coming on by twos and threes rose out of the darkness. And so the procession wound in, and Lindo found himself suddenly surrounded—where a moment before no sounds but painful ones had been heard—by the hum and bustle, the quick questions and answers, of a crowd. For the men brought good news. The missing were found. Though many of them were burned or scorched, and others were suffering from the effects of the afterdamp, the explorers brought back with them no still, ominous burden, nor even any case of hopeless injury, such as that of the poor fellow in delirium over whom his mates bent with the strange impassive patience which seems to be a quality peculiar to those who get their living underground.

Not that Lindo at the time had leisure to consider their behaviour. The injured were brought to him as a matter of course, and he did what he could with simple bandages and liniment to keep the air from their wounds, and to enable the men to reach the surface with as little pain as possible. For more than an hour, as he passed from one to the other, his hands were never empty; he could think only of his work. The deputy-manager, who had been leading the rescue party, was thoroughly prostrated. The rest never doubted that the stranger was a surgeon, and it was curious to see their surprise when the general taciturnity allowed the fact that he was only a parson to leak out. They were like savants with a specimen which, known to belong to a particular species, has none of the class attributes, and sets at defiance all preconceived ideas upon the subject. He, too, when he was at length free to look about him, found matter for astonishment in his own sensations. The cabin and the roadway outside, where the men sat patiently waiting their turns to ascend, had become almost homelike in his eyes. The lounging figures here thrown into relief by a score of lamps, there lost in the gloom of the background, had grown familiar. He knew that this was here and that was there, and had his receptacles and conveniences, his special attendants and helpers. In a word, he had made the place his own, yet without forgetting old habits—for more than once he caught himself looking at his watch, and wondering when it would be day.

Towards seven o'clock a message directed to him by name came down. A cage would be rigged up within the hour. Before that period elapsed, however, he was summoned to be present at the death of the poor fellow who had been delirious since he was found, and who now passed away in the same state. It was a trying scene, coming just when the clergyman's wrought-up nerves were beginning to feel a reaction—the more trying as all looked to him to do anything that could be done. But that was nothing; and he felt gravely thankful when the poor man's sufferings were over, and the throng of swarthy faces melted from the open doorway.

He sat apart a while after that, until a commotion outside the cabin and a cheery voice asking for Mr. Lindo summoned him to the door, where he found the manager who had sent him down the night before, and who now greeted him warmly. 'It is not for me to thank you,' Mr. Peat said—'I have nothing to do with this pit. The owner, to whom what has happened will be reported, will do that; but personally I am obliged to you, Mr. Lindo, and I am sure the men are.'

'I wanted only to be of help,' the clergyman answered simply. 'There was not much I could do.'

'Well, that is a matter of opinion,' the manager replied. 'I have mine, and I know that the men who have come up have theirs. However, here is the cage; perhaps you will not mind going up with poor Edwards?'

'Not at all,' said the rector; and, following the manager to the cage, he stepped into it without any suspicion that this was a trick on the part of Mr. Peat to ensure his volunteer's services being recognised.

He found the ascent a very different thing from the descent. The steady upward motion was not unpleasant, and long before the surface was reached his eyes, accustomed to darkness, detected a pale gleam of light stealing downwards, and could distinguish the damp brickwork gliding by. Presently the light grew stronger —grew dazzling in its wonderful whiteness. 'We are going up nicely,' his companion murmured, remembering in his gratitude that the ascent, which was a trifle to him even with shattered nerves, might be unpleasant to the other—'we are nearly there.'

And so they were; and slowly and gently they rose into the broad daylight and the sunshine, which seemed to proclaim to the rector's heart that sorrow may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning.

Standing densely packed round the pit's mouth was a great crowd—a crowd, at any rate, of many hundreds. They greeted the appearance of the cage with a quick drawing-in of the breath and a murmur of pity. Lindo's face and hands were as black as any collier's; his dress seemed at the first glance as theirs. But as he helped to lift his injured companion out and carry him to the stretcher which stood at hand, the word ran round who he was; and, though no one spoke, the loudest tribute would scarcely have been more eloquent than the respect with which the rough assemblage fell away to right and left that he might pass out to the gig which had been thoughtfully provided—first to carry him to the vicarage for a wash, and afterwards to take him home. His heart was full as he walked down the lane, every man standing uncovered, and the women gazing on him with unspoken blessings in their eyes.

A very few hours before he had felt at war with the world. He had said, not perhaps that all men were liars, but that they were unjust, full of prejudice and narrowness and ill-will; that, above all, they judged without charity. Now, as the pony-cart rattled down the road through the cutting, and the sunny landscape, the winding river, and the plain round Claversham opened before him, he felt far otherwise. He longed to do more for others than he had done. He dwelt with wonder on the gratitude which services so slight had evoked from men so rough as those from whom he had just parted. And unconsciously he placed the balance in their favour to the general account of the world, and acknowledged himself its debtor.

(To be continued.)

AFOOT.

I SUPPOSE it is a very palpable truism to aver that people do not nowadays walk anything like as much as they used to. If some doctors are to be believed, we pay for this slight to our feet by abbreviated lives; though, in the face of the repeated assurances on all sides that longevity is much more common than it was, this professional opinion is hard to credit. No doubt the shoemakers suffer by our affection for the familiar 'bus and the agile hansom, and our patronage of the malodorous underground railway. But as shoemakers exist for our convenience, and not *vice versâ*, we may be cold-blooded enough to say that this fact is not a very alarming one for the world in general.

During undergraduate days, and indeed up to the age of thirty or so, there are times when we are imperatively compelled to take to our legs as a relief to our feelings. Who has not felt this? It may be anxiety about the examinations (a foolish and unphilosophic state of mind!), or the more than common realisation that there are more unpaid bills on the mantelpiece than papa's allowance can settle in five years; or one's head may be a little befogged, due to the bad wine of that fellow in the rooms below; or Cupid (impudent little wretch!) may have shot an arrow into one's heart, and set one's whole corporation at discord with itself.

Under these circumstances, really and truly it is well to put on one's thickest boots, take a clublike stick, and stride away anywhere, without heed of weather, mile-stones, or compass. It doesn't matter in the least which way you go. The thing you have to do is to walk yourself into a state of bodily collapse, or something like it. Then it will be time enough to look at your watch, and make for the nearest inn. No doubt, if you are a long way from a railway-station (a most improbable thing!), there will be a dog-cart in the village. If not, still, you may rest a while, drink some beer, smoke a cigar, snap your fingers at black care, and then set off to try and retrace your steps. The odds are fifty to one you don't succeed without a most fatiguing amount of interrogation of rustics. By that time you will be sweetly exhausted—you will, in fact, have done precisely what your humour bade you do. And afterwards, neither the sheaf of

tradesmen's bills, nor Cupid, nor the fumes of indifferent claret, nor all the examiners in Christendom shall be able, for a while, to disturb your spirits.

It was in some such mental stir as this that Christopher North made his phenomenal tramp from the west end of London to Oxford one night. He got into his rooms before some of his friends were breakfasting—nor do we hear that he was remarkably tired. But then he was a very Titan of pedestrianism. He would set off for a forty-mile walk, giving but eight hours to it, as you or I might begin a constitutional of five or six miles. Once he trusted to his legs to take him from Liverpool to his sweet lake-land home of Elleray. This is seventy or eighty miles of going, up hill and down dale; yet he did it within four-and-twenty hours. Walking Stewart himself was, no doubt, a fine friend to cobblers; but it is odd if Professor Wilson, of Edinburgh and Elleray, was not his superior at long distances.

Yet, spite of all his athletic vigour and strength, Wilson did not live to be a septuagenarian. The discreet clubman of Piccadilly, who begins to be old at forty-five or fifty, and ever afterwards walks like a snail, with one hand in the small of his back and the other on his stick, lives to be ninety without much of an effort; while the athlete of world-wide fame dies ere he reaches the common limit of our days. No wonder sensational feats in pedestrianism excite the admiration rather than the emulation of the majority of us.

From eighteen to thirty, or thereabouts, seems to be the period during which we may do pretty much as we please with impunity—whether in walking or aught else. Certainly these are the days which rivet our affections upon moors and mountains, and when we find the devious and rocky banks of the trout-streams not a bit too devious and rocky. Our British mountains are not much to boast about; but there is something very exhilarating in the spirits of half-a-dozen youths who find themselves on the summit of Helvellyn or Scaw Fell for the first time. They think they have done a wonderful thing. They open their sandwich packets and draw the corks of their bottles, toast the mountain air and the prospect, and end by casting stones at the unfortunate bottles which have provided them with sustenance. So, too, among the heather. When one's sinews are supple and lungs irreproachable, there seems no limit to the number of miles a pair of legs will carry one. Rain and mist are of no account as

obstacles. We are told in the North that the softer the weather the healthier it is; and we are then willing enough to believe the doctrine. The trout confirm us in our fancy that wet weather is as good as Italian skies. We fill all our pockets with them; and anon, when the day is well on the wane, it is nothing to our legs that they have to bear an added burden of twenty or thirty pounds of fish to our destination for the night.

I have in my mind while I write memories of walks in different parts of the world, in Greece and Italy as well as in the Highlands, in several of the States of America, in Africa, and in six or seven of the islands of the Mediterranean. Of all these walks the British take the fairest colouring in the mirror of retrospect. Elsewhere the sun was nearly always a trial, often an agony. In the lower latitudes you cannot rest at full length on mother earth with anything like the assurance Great Britain affords of immunity from the annoyances of ants and worse things than ants. To talk of cloudy skies and green fields is to babble about what we are all familiar with; but there is assuredly nothing in the wide world that appeals so successfully to English hearts as our English landscapes. The Swiss mountains and glens are, no doubt, surpassingly fine; but we stand in their presence as a humble person may be supposed to stand before his country's sovereign surrounded by regal power and splendour. It is very exciting and magnificent, but it does not put us quite at our ease. On the other hand, the bosses of elms and oaks in an ordinary English valley, the red-roofed houses with a brown crocketed church spire in their midst, the shining river, the green meadows, and the fields of divers hues, with the medley of clouds overhead—these are what one loves, even as one loves one's armchair or the pipe which has been the confidant of one's anxieties and hopes this many a year.

Long distances afoot seem a mistake, unless necessity is the spur. If we lived a thousand years apiece, instead of barely a hundred, it might be otherwise. As it is, however, such feats are only for the man who finds ordinary life uncongenial. I know a couple of Oxonians who had good sport as travelling tinkers for a month of the long vacation. They paid their way by tinkering (very badly, no doubt), by singing comic songs in innocent, sequestered villages, and even by agitating as political demagogues. The 'three acres and a cow' catch served them with endless material for stump-oratory.. Sometimes they were posed by the blunt

interrogations of the village-inn politicians, who thought their roseate Radicalism just a little too roseate. But these impertinences they could easily dispose of by some irrelevant witticism, or by some such trick of dialectics as Plato and the other ancients might have been thanked for. As may be imagined, they had plenty of chances of fun. I am afraid to say how many village beauties they claimed to have kissed. They balanced accounts for mended kettles and saucepans in this way—much, I should suppose, to the satisfaction of all parties concerned, including the next itinerant tinker who chanced to pass over the ground they had traversed. But after a month they tired of the life; and so they stored their implements in a rustic barn, and took the train home to their distressed parents, who fancied they were all the time engaged in something vastly more nefarious. But they did not tell their anxious sires that, so far from being extravagant, they had been leading lives of ridiculous cheapness. Else, in all probability, the old gentlemen would have done their utmost to persuade them to spend all their vacations in so exemplary and educative a manner.

The other day I heard from a correspondent of an unfortunate pedestrian who started, almost alone, upon a walk of 950 miles in Central Africa. One is used to long distances in that part of the world—or, at least, to hearing and reading about them. It seems to us islanders, however, as if they were ordinarily so contrived that a walk of from five to ten miles per diem was reckoned a very fair achievement. Perhaps it is, when brushes with pigmies and other inimical natives, wide rivers full of hippopotami and crocodiles, primeval forests, and that sort of thing, are the various impediments to progress: not to mention the trials which health has to suffer, and the hardships the stomach has to endure as best it may.

This pedestrian, however, was a missionary, not an accredited explorer. He set off in all the sublime self-confidence of his ignorance, and with a very fair wallet of hopes in his heart. But ere he had covered thirty miles of the 950, he was knocked down by dysentery. He forgot that he was not in England, where one may walk with impunity at noon in the dog days. Sunstroke also touched him, and it was in this melancholy plight that my Central African correspondent found him one evening. He died in the night at 1 A.M., and my friend duly buried him at 9 A.M.

What can be more recklessly imprudent than the proverbial

folly of our middle-aged countrymen who take the mail train to Bâle, and so contrive it that, within thirty hours of the time when they sat at their desks in the City, they are planning an ascent of one of the most laborious peaks in all Switzerland. Does not one know the kind of people? Why, I have met them on the Welsh mountains in a state of absolute exhaustion, with reeling limbs and not a puff of breath left in their bodies. They have petitioned for a taste of my whisky-flask, much as a notorious sinner might on his death-bed ask the clergyman to save him from the consequences of his various misdemeanours. Whisky in such a case is wasted: it does them more harm than good. All they need to do is to lie on their backs in the heather until they feel a little better, and then creep down to the lowlands again, looking as ashamed of themselves as they ought to feel. They would do well, in future, to husband their self-respect by consecrating the first few days of their holiday to a gentle and methodical totter up and down the promenade of some salubrious seaside resort. Afterwards they may venture to tackle hills a thousand or two feet high without much risk to their hearts.

I rather think the fair sex in England may claim to be better average walkers than their brothers and husbands. This is a bold affirmation, and yet it seems justifiable. They are not so prone to call a hansom in town when they feel tired. On they trudge until they are, as they say, 'ready to drop.' Often, indeed, they do drop—into a policeman's hands, in their misjudged attempts to cross Regent's Circus, when in this condition of incipient breakdown. Their pluck is marvellous. A glass of milk and a doughy bun will enable them to keep moving for an indefinite number of hours. As for the afterwards—well, it may take care of itself. But I must say I have heard awful language of a kind from the lips of two ladies—sisters—who have been compelled to spend the evening together after a day of such strenuous exertions. It made them seem much less amiable than they really were.

Our friends across the Channel make much of this *penchant* for pedestrianism among our British girls. They belie their reputation for courtesy by the frequency with which they caricature, on the boards of their inferior theatres, the style and manners of our aunts out for a holiday. Goths though we Britons undoubtedly are in some particulars, we do not hold up to ridicule the female relations of the French. They are far from immaculate, but we take mercy on them, and leave them and their imperfec-

tions very much alone. Yet this does not hinder them from making merry over the impossible antics and imbecility of the comic persons who dress up as the English travelling 'mees' in a long chessboard ulster, with ringlets, spectacles, an alpenstock, and a phrase-book.

The truth is, I believe, that they are jealous of the vigour and independence of our girls. These, moreover, possess such muscles to their legs as they can never have. It is an inherited faculty with them—the outcome of free association with brothers in the time of childhood and youth, of district visiting, climate, and much else. There was a certain amount of chivalry in the conception of the incident in the French play which showed us an English walking-lady carrying a tired foreigner in her arms down one of the high Alps. It was an absurd situation, of course; but not a bit more absurd than the eternal spectacled spinster who strides over Europe in her tiresome ulster.

I know a man who took his wife to Iceland for the honeymoon, and camped out, and climbed Hecla during this period of exuberant happiness. On the top of Hecla whom should he meet but a couple of Frenchmen with guns on their backs, and quite in the humour to flirt with any pretty woman, whether newly-wed or not. All four made acquaintance, and enjoyed a brief talk in the desert. But when it transpired that Iceland and Hecla were a British idea of the *lune de miel*, the one Frenchman fled laughing to his tent, and his friend, perforce, with an apologetic shrug of his shoulders, followed him. These two men subsequently mentioned the incident as the most remarkable that occurred to them during a six weeks' tour in the island. The desolation of the north coast, the geysers, the lonesome valleys, and even the reindeer they shot, were all trivial to it.

Someone has said that the Germans beat the French in 1870 because they possessed superior walking powers. One need not altogether believe this. Yet there does seem to have been a measure of sense in it. There was no end to the pluck of the Westphalians and Saxons in trudging up and down the hills round Metz when they pressed upon Bazaine and his red-legged troops. This, too, in mid-August, which is as warm in the land of the Moselle as an average day in Bombay! But the valorous Teutons did not faint by the way, and only the most meagre proportion of them dreamed of falling out for a minute or two, unless they were wounded. They owed it to their lusty physique, and

that, in turn, they owed to their sobriety and their boyish habits of pedestrianism. The enthusiastic professors who lead their pupils into the Hartz mountains or the Black Forest during a vacation deserve well of their country. In their blue veils and spectacles, with their paraphernalia of hammers, tin-boxes, and butterfly-nets they may seem to us as comical as my newly-married friends on Hecla seemed to the Frenchmen. But what need they care for that? True contentment, we all know, comes from within, not from things and persons external. And it is necessary only to glance at the faces of professor and flock to realise that they are in no discontented mood.

To the man who does not walk, about half of Great Britain is like a sealed book. He may read descriptions of those parts, but he can never hope to behold them with the eyes of sense.

Take the coast by the Land's End, for example. It provides a number of alluring sensations for the pedestrian. The headland itself was probably as accessible a century ago as it is to-day. There is no railway thither—a mercy for which the modern person of sentiment cannot be sufficiently grateful. Coaches traverse the high road, and convey the conventional tourist to a hotel where he may have a meal, a bed, and a bill as elsewhere. But it is an extremely dull high road. Its ten miles of length from Penzance are for the most part through a level, hedgeless country of poor pasture, stone walls, and patches of gorse and heath.

Contrast this with the coast route. We skirt granite cliffs hundreds of feet perpendicular, at the base of which the blue Atlantic breaks with a fine splutter, and cross rugged little inlets cumbered with granite boulders rounded by the waves into the aspect of marbles fit for Titans. Here is no carriage-way. It is much too remote for the more valetudinarian of tourists. There are no houses of refreshment to tempt the traveller to be enjoyably indolent. Vipers are common objects in the long grass, at the head of the more sheltered coves. You may find half a vessel in another recess, with a litter of iron rods and splintered spars alongside it—maybe even a drowned seaman prone upon the smoothed granite pebbles. This year, at any rate, you will find dead starlings by the thousand. They died on the coast in the snow of March. Spent with fatigue after crossing the Channel with empty stomachs, they dropped here in hosts. In places they were a foot deep. The gulls and others who thought to make meals of them found them not worth the picking.

These sights and discoveries are for the pedestrian alone. Even the cyclist, hardy invader of byeways though he may be, cannot make much of our Cornish coast.

Our finest memories of landscapes are those we gain afoot. The eye has then time to look and look until the scene is registered on the brain. Twenty years later, you can recall it without much effort. On the other hand, you cross the St. Gothard by railway. Here you are in the midst of chaotic rocks with waterfalls and mountains and precipices all about you of the kind your fellow-travellers salute with many an enraptured 'Goodness gracious!' Yet, though the train does not move very fast, it moves too fast for your brain. A year later, unless you are uncommonly retentive of impressions, the St. Gothard will be a very incoherent memory to you.

That is why I, for one, am never satisfied unless I can spend some hours afoot in any famous place to which my inclination may have led me. Each jog-trot movement seems to act like those machines of Mr. Edison in registering the detail of an impression.

I have mentioned the Cornish coast as an excellent field for the man who has faith in his legs. Anglesey also may, for its comparative remoteness and interest (though of a different kind), be bracketed with it. The scenery here is not sensational. But it looks across the Menai Strait at the boldest grouping of mountains we possess south of the Grampians. From the royal village of Aberffraw (where for centuries the old kings of Wales had their palace), now half-choked in sand, the Cambrian hills, from Penmaenmawr to Bardsey, are a delightful spectacle, with Snowdon distinctly the master.

These sands of Anglesey are for the pedestrian alone. The south-west waves roar over them with tremendous force, and the wind lifts them and whirls them in one's face with a heartiness which makes one think of a simoom in the Sahara. On the southern side of the inlet of Malldraeth, for instance, is an area of ten or twelve miles wholly resigned to sand, rabbits, and the rare plants which flourish amid the sand-grasses and the salt winds. It is called Newborough Warren, and is a fair sample of the shores of Medoc, where the sands thus overwhelm the country as heralds of the sea itself. In the midst of this baleful expanse stands the town of Newborough, one of the most populous in all Anglesey, with its precise thoroughfares teeming with children. Some hundreds of years ago, Newborough was known as Rhosfair or Rhoshir

('the tiresome waste'). Then it became the representative city of the island, and sent the county member to Westminster. But the progress of the sand-invasion has never ceased, and the town is doomed to eventual suffocation. Half the parish is already under sand. Three centuries hence its chimney pots may mark the sepulchre of the rest of the town.

In the north-west of the same island the man afoot will be quaintly gratified with his experiences. You do not see such farmhouses elsewhere in the land. They are plain enough, set square upon the ground, but remarkable for their complexions. One building is a blinking white, every inch of it—slate roof, chimney pots, and even the grey stones of its encircling walls. Another has a white body, with windows a dark green, or a vivid yoke-of-egg yellow. Here, again, is a porch with a lintel of red bricks and mortar, the bricks freshly painted a bright vermilion, and the very mortar between the bricks whitewashed to emphasise the effect. In this part of Anglesey the stranger is still looked upon with curious eyes, and the Englishman retains in some degree his old character of the marauding Saxon, prone to indulge in all manner of oppressions and impertinences. The farm-lasses greet him with pleasure and sprightliness, as if he were a handsome and generous highwayman in a shallow disguise. But the rustics, hodding turnips, rest on their staves, and seem prepared to act on the defensive, while eyeing him uneasily, and discussing him with lightning-flashes of native speech until he has passed pacifically out of sight.

North, south, east, and west, there are many other fascinating spots about our land which are worth investigating, and to which not even the millionaire, with his chariot and horses at a thousand guineas the pair, can get access, unless he walks. The man with stout calves to his legs is lord of himself like any philosopher. Surely, therefore, we shall do well to inculcate the habit of walking at least as earnestly as any other form of athletics. It may be good to have gigantic biceps. It is certainly more useful to have legs capable of endurance.

To become an enthusiastic pedestrian it is not essential to have, like Professor Wilson, the epidermis to one's heel of peculiar thickness. A little energy and strength, and the necessary amount of will, are enough to begin with. Practice will, of course, increase all three considerably. Longevity cannot fail to follow. The professional tramp, like the common domestic donkey, is as nearly immortal as he need be.

THE WAIFS OF WIND CREEK.

I.

For about fifty miles from its source, Wind Creek runs almost due south, following down the west side of the eastern spur of the Rockies, or, to speak more accurately, the 'foothills'—for although many of the peaks in the spur rise to a considerable altitude, and the greater portion of the 'divide' is inaccessible, still they are dwarfed, and their height made comparatively insignificant, by the gigantic crests beyond to the westward.

The course of the creek is tortuous and meandering; as though in its original descent it had turned aside to look into every gap and scissure in the hope of finding an outlet to the plains, and freedom. But, like many of the ways of men, its career had been preordained: it might just as well have taken a perfectly straight course parallel with the divide, and so have saved many unnecessary disappointments.

And after all, at last having found the looked-for cañon, it has perforce to join hands with the Lesser Bear Creek; and again, a few miles farther on, the identity of both is sunk in the waters of the Maple River. The Maple River, in its turn, does not run for more than a hundred miles out on the arid plains before it 'runs under' in the sand, and ceases to exist. How many other little lives are mirrored in the history of this little stream?

It was to this locality, perhaps never before trodden by the foot of the white hunter, that two men had come in the early spring. About a mile above the juncture of the two streams, and up to the westward, on Bear Creek, they had thrown together a little shanty, half *adobe*, half log, in which they had just commenced to 'keep house,' with the intention of trapping and poisoning those animals upon which the Territory paid a 'bounty'—bears, mountain-lions, wild cats, wolves, &c.; with perhaps an occasional eagle, and the larger hawks: for on these birds there was a bounty also. They would occupy the summer in this way, perhaps with considerable profit, until the fur season again came round.

Dave, the elder of the two men, had been a widower for many years, and was an old frontierman. He had never told his partner how he had lost his wife; nor had he spoken of any children,

though he once had been the happy father of three. Although his wife had been a half-breed, he had an inexorable hatred of Indians.

Jim, his partner, was a widower also; his little girl, four years old, was now with them, and was by no means the least important of the household. It was about the middle of the afternoon, a week or so after their arrival:

'You stay with the "Kid," said Dave, 'and see about fixing supper, while I go down the creek to where we killed that black-tail, and stick some poison out. Likely I may's well take the bear-trap along, in case of sign.'

On the previous day they had killed a 'black-tail,' and, having of course taken nothing but the 'saddle' for their use, it was highly probable that there would be some 'sign' (perhaps of bear) round the remaining carcass.

'It *is* set,' replied Jim, referring to the trap: by which he did not mean that it was actually set, but that the ponderous springs were already levered down, and the rings pushed up upon them, so that one man, without the assistance of a lever, could accomplish the ultimate setting.

A powerful-looking engine of destruction is a bear-trap. In addition to the strong jaws, like a giant ordinary 'gin,' with a spring at either end, there are three exceedingly valid hooks, one on either end of the jaws, and one in the middle, which effectually prevent the unfortunate captive from twisting round; by which means it might otherwise twist its leg off or break the trap. Then there is the short stout chain attached to a heavy log: the chain must not be too long, otherwise if a grizzly be caught by the fore-leg he will stand up against a tree and with a few powerful strokes shatter the trap to fragments, and be free; again, if the log were not used but the chain made fast to something immovable, a few twists and the ponderous strength of a grizzly would snap the stoutest chain—especially if the bear were taken by a hind-leg. Though the trap may be dragged a long distance, of course the track of the trailing log may easily be followed.

Dave went a little way up the creek to where the horses were picketed, and taking one off the ropes brought it back to the cabin, put a pack-saddle on it, hung the trap by one of its jaws on the front cross, arranged the log on the top, slung an axe to the hind cross, threw the bridle-rein up over one of the springs of the trap, and, rifle in hand, started down the creek; the horse following him.

Not more than a hundred yards below the junction of the two streams, he stopped the horse, dropped its bridle-reins to the ground, and proceeded cautiously on alone. He looked closely for tracks, but found nothing that looked very fresh until he came upon the carcass of the 'black-tail,' which lay in the narrowest part of the cañon, where there was no more than a space of some ten feet between the stream and the sheer perpendicular cliff; all around it there were the tracks of a large bear. The carcass was not touched—not even the head or the liver; evidently the tracks were not those of a 'cinnamon,' but of a large grizzly—yet one of those that had not learnt to eat flesh, but lived exclusively on berries, roots, and other such dainties. It was also evident that he had come from down the creek and had returned the same way.

Dave took all this in at a glance. He selected a spot a few yards down the stream, in a little cluster of red willows, to set his trap; choosing an opening about three feet wide, between the stems of two willows, through which the bear had passed both in coming and going; then, to make doubly sure, he bent and intertwined the smaller branches of the willows carelessly, in all directions, between the stream and the bluff, just sufficiently to check the progress of a suspicious animal in any direction but through the opening.

Then he returned to the horse and brought the trap and log —nearly as much as he could carry. Having scooped out a place to fit it, he stood across the trap with a foot on either jaw, and set the trigger to his liking; covered it carefully with a little earth and moss, so that all looked like the surrounding ground; passed the rings back off the springs, and then covered them and the chain carefully from sight.

All being accomplished to his satisfaction, he returned to the carcass, cut the liver into 'baits,' produced a small bottle of strychnine and dropped a few grains into each, and threw them about on the ground; then plunging his skinning-knife into the carcass in several places he poisoned that as well.

It is wonderful how careless these men become with poison. I remember one case of a fellow who carried a bottle of strychnine and his chewing-tobacco in the same pocket. One day he was found curled up (dead, of course) with his head and heels nearly touching.

Little did Dave think that for the last ten minutes or more he

had been watched from behind a rock beneath the opposite cliff by a pair of wistful and startled grey eyes. Never, in fact, had a man's movements been more keenly scrutinised than his; and those eyes belonged to the most unlikely of all things in the world to be in such a spot—a young woman.

The day was closing in.

As Dave wended his way home, a lithe figure stepped out from its hiding-place and followed cautiously along on the other side of the stream. Attired as a man, in buck-skin, or probably elk-skin, it looked like some youthful hunter: but there was a fragile grace in the gait that belied the dress. Dark wavy hair hung upon the shoulders. Every now and again the figure stopped suddenly, like some timid animal, and stood undecided; then a look of curiosity and fascination came into the eyes, and the girl (for girl it assuredly was) went cautiously forward.

Before Dave had gone far, he evidently came upon something on the ground which had before escaped his keen eye. At his feet there was a track that he could not quite make out; he turned and followed it to the creek; here, just beside the water, it was more distinct. He looked troubled and uneasy. Several large slippery boulders seemed to have been used for stepping-stones across the stream. In crossing upon them he slipped up and into the water. The girl, who watched him, laughed merrily, seemed inclined to come forward, and then shrank timidly back. Dave had noticed nothing but his own fall, and turned once more up the stream.

When he arrived at the shanty it was almost dark. Jim was busy preparing supper; and the little girl was playing with the big mongrel dog. Dave sat down before the fire with a bowl of potatoes between his knees and commenced to peel them.

'Jim,' he said, presently, 'we've got neighbours of some kind. I came across a track of some kind of a raw-hide foot-fixing—no heel. But it ain't Indians: sort o' too pointed at the toes for a mocassin.'

II.

After the remains of supper, a meal of which they usually partook about sundown, had been cleared away and the dishes washed up, the two men drew up round the open fire. This time was always devoted to the amusement of the Kid. She was now

upon her father's knee begging in sundry ways peculiar to children all the world over to be made a fuss with. Jim rode her on his foot; but that didn't seem to suit. Then he began to sing several snatches of rough doggerel songs, probably not originally intended for nursery use:

> Oh ma'am, oh ma'am, just look at Kate—
> She's wiping her nose with a buckwheat cake—

he began; but the Kid evidently wanted no more of that. Then he tried another:

> Apple-sass
> And sparrer-grass,
> And the old——

but that wouldn't do.

> Little brown dog he come a-trotten down the road,
> And the wind——

A sharp tug at his beard stopped that. Then in a very high key he commenced:

> We won't work on the railroad,
> We won't work on the trail,
> For we'll go down to Cheyenne town
> And play——

But the child stopped him again.

'Tory! 'tory!' she exclaimed, tugging at his shirt-sleeve; 'Unco Dave! beaver 'tory.'

'She wants me to tell her about the little beaver that broke up Dan's housekeeping,' said Dave. 'Don't you, my pet? Come along then.' And he opened his arms as the child toddled across to him. On his lap she seemed just as comfortable as upon her father's, and in contemplation of hearing her favourite story she was happy.

'Well, once upon a time,' began Dave, with a peculiar intonation into which he lapsed only when 'yarning' to the Kid, 'there was——'

'What's that, Jim?' he broke off; 'seems to me I heard something "patter." Are the horses picketed all right?'

'Once upon a time, in Trap Country, in the Territory of Trapa——'

'There, Jim! I heard it again.' The dog too had pricked up his ears.

This time, at any rate, Dave was not mistaken; for as he was speaking the latch of the door went up with a click, and before

either of them had thought of doing anything, someone was in the room. The two men were spell-bound.

Attired as the figure was, there was no mistaking at a glance that their visitor was a woman—and one both young, pretty, and unconventional to boot. Looking from one to the other, she at last fixed her eyes on Dave and asked, with arched eyebrows and questioning eyes:

'Are you a *man*?'

Had such an interrogation come from the lips of a man, it might have led to calamity. As it was, Dave looked surprised only. With a glance up and down the length of the intruder, in which no inflection of the graceful figure was left unprospected, he answered slowly:

'Well, that's what I've generally proposed to be.'

To his utter astonishment, the girl came forward and kissed him. He did not resent the freedom; but when she crossed over and performed the same kind office on *Jim*, saying, 'And you're one too,' he thought that she was perhaps a little too munificent.

'I never saw a man before,' continued the artless girl, 'except you. I've watched you for days and days, and when I told mother she was frightened and angry . . . and cried, and talked so funny, I couldn't understand.'

'Then you've got a mother?' said Jim, as though he had rather thought somehow that she had dropped down upon them from the clouds. With more gallantry than the elder man, or perhaps only because he had had more time to regain his presence of mind, he had given up his seat to her and stood to one side, casting covert and curious glances at Dave, who still held the child (whose large wondering eyes surveyed the intruder) upon his knee.

''Tory! 'tory!' reminded the child.

Then, for the first time, the stranger seemed to notice it, and she gave a little cry—half delight, half astonishment. Noting the longing look, Dave good-naturedly placed the child upon her knee, and she covered it with kisses, saying:

'I suppose I was like that once?'

The question was at once so innocent and so undissembling that it seemed to warrant no reply.

But when she added, 'Won't you give it to me, to keep—to play with?' Jim only laughed and shook his head, and answered:

'Not much!'

In perfect faith the little thing nestled in her lap, and, looking up into her face, called out again, 'Tory.'

'I was just commencing to tell the Kid a yarn,' explained Dave, 'when you stepped in'—he spoke almost as though they had expected the visit—'and I suppose if I don't go on with it there'll be a racket.'

'Won't you tell it to me too? I like stories. Mother tells me stories sometimes . . . when she can think; but sometimes she can't think: oh, she's so funny!' At this mention of a mother a shade seemed to fall, for the first time, upon the bright questioning face.

Dave drew himself forward and gazed into the fire. A strange little circle was this: the girl's expectant face; the child's complacent attitude; Dave's open, honest countenance; Jim's towering figure in the background—all these things the light of the fire played upon and intensified. And, strange to say, it leant to the little group also an air of long familiarity.

'Once upon a time,' began Dave, 'in Trap Country, in the Territory of Trapaho, there lived a trapper by the name of Dan. He wasn't a bad sort of man, although a mixture of French, Indian, and nigger (a pretty mean cross!). At first, when he used to go into Virgin City, the fellows called him by any name that came edgeways and uppermost. *He* appeared the *least* interested what he was called, as long as it was in time for meals; until one day Dutch Pede unfortunately hit upon the distinction of "Liar." Even then Dan didn't seem to mind much, but simply said, "Stranger, you mustn't call *me* a liar!"—and the funeral took place early in the afternoon.

'Dan was trapping up on the Little Horn about eighty miles from Virgin City. He was a poor man (it ain't often that the rich take up the business), possessed of merely the bare necessities of life. In his little cabin he had neither chairs nor table. Once he had had a pack of cards; but he had traded them off one day to another trapper who happened to pass by on his road from town with plenty of whisky. But Dan had one thing that no one could trade him out of (not even with whisky)—a tame beaver——'

'I had a little bear once,' volunteered the listening girl—it was evident that in intellect she was but a child—'but poor Davey—mother called it "Davi"—died.'

'Yes, it is hard to raise 'em, I expect,' said Jim, looking

admiringly down on the girl, 'but I never gave it a trial—and don't know as I want to.'

'He called it Jerry,' Dave went on, continuing the story. 'It was such a curious little thing, with a lovely soft curly coat and such a funny tail!—very broad and flat, and about as long as himself. This tail was the one thing about Jerry's general construction that he couldn't see the use of; instead of lying flat upon the ground, as he thought it ought, it would always set up edgeways. If there was a crack anywhere about, it was sure to fall through it and get firmly wedged. One day, while Dan was out, it *had* fallen through a crack in the floor, and Jerry had to cut out (with his teeth, of course) a large hole to release it. He would stop sometimes, expecting to see it trailing along after him, with disgust; and once he started in to cut it off, but it hurt!——'

At this the little child burst out into a fit of uncontrollable laughter.

'He always was very sleepy in the daytime, and would lie coiled up upon the bed; but at night nothing was frisky enough for him, and sometimes he would go off for an evening stroll.

'After a time Dan had got enough skins together to once more pay a visit to Virgin City. He of course took Jerry and carried him about all over town, where he (not Dan, you bet!) was much petted and admired by the ladies. Well, Dan made a good sale of his wares, and then he felt so rich that he determined to go in for some comfort at home, and accordingly invested in a few gallons of whisky, a pack of cards, and a complete outfit of rough furniture. Next morning of course he was "broke," and as he couldn't trade his purchases away again to any fair advantage for anything wet and palatable, was reluctantly obliged to get for home again. He could have raised the necessary on his beaver no doubt, but his answer was, "Dan ain't that kind of a man."'

'I won't sell my ickle beaver, will I, Unco Dave, when I get it?' put in the Kid gravely; by which it would seem that she had been promised one—by her father probably.

And then the girl said, 'I had a little catamount once, but a rock fell down on it.' Strange to say, much as she had appeared to enjoy the prospect of hearing this story told, she now seemed to be taking much more interest in the child upon her knee; and perhaps that unconsciously recalled incidents in the past—perhaps of her own childhood.

'Now Dan being an extremely plain man,' Dave went on, 'he was only vain about his personal appearance, as a general thing; but on the night of his arrival home, after taking his purchases into the cabin and placing a demijohn of whisky upon the table, he sat admiringly for some time, and then, taking the demijohn with him, retired for the night justly proud of himself and his cabin—for he was the first trapper ever known to leave Virgin City with more than the loss of an eye, ear, or part of a nose; many had been rendered perfectly incapable of leaving without assistance.

'Jerry could not at all understand what it all meant. He did not even see the use of a very comfortable, though plain, arm-chair that was Dan's especial pride; but what played most upon his feelings was that he had been entirely forgotten, and could find neither food nor water. He wandered disconsolately round the table, sniffing suspiciously at the legs, and at last concluded (beavers are mighty cunning) that Dan was on a bender. He walked to the head of the bed, smelt the demijohn, and doubted no longer. At last, right in one corner of the room, he found a pail of water (Dan was generally careful enough to keep the water-bucket up out of his reach). The pail was high and Jerry was fat, but with a run and a jump, and before that tail of his could spring him down again, he had hooked his forepaws up over the edge of the bucket. In another second Jerry was on his back in a pool of water, drenched to the skin. Here was a go! What was he to do?'

This position was hailed with a crow of delight by the Kid, who almost wriggled off the girl's lap.

'When Dan woke up next morning he had a dim recollection of strange grating sounds during the night. Perhaps there had been a storm. With this idea he took a drink and then looked out of the single pane of glass—the only source of light in the little sleeping-partition; but all outside was calm and still. The sun hadn't risen yet, and the shadow of the high and rocky cliffs to the east of the cabin mantled the valley. With a yawn he stepped out into the main, and in fact only, room of the cabin. What he saw . . . . But I'm getting along too fast, and must go back a little . . . .

'Looking on the pale sheet of water, strange recollections seem to have flashed upon Jerry, or perhaps it was only dormant instinct called into play by the first body of water he had seen since his

uncertain childhood. I don't know. Maybe he saw the sparkling mountain torrent dammed in the ingenious fashion of his tribe, and in that instant he saw clearly how to do it himself; or maybe it was only out of cussedness; there was plenty of material handy to make a dam, so he set to work to make one, with that amount of energy only given to the beaver and the bee.

'What Dan saw was the result of Jerry's hard night's work. There, in the middle of a pool of water, was a high pile; table and chairs all cut up into nice even lengths by Jerry's sharp teeth and worked in together most ingeniously. The poor innocent (?) little pet, exhausted, lay coiled up beside the wreck of Dan's first attempt at civilised life. From the quiet expression of the face it seemed that he was content, and quite proud of this, his first attempt to use that wonderful instinct that Providence had given him—his partner having so kindly *furnished* the material.

'Dan only gazed a moment on the scene. He was a very cool man of few words. He smiled (he wore a regular smile: people in Virgin City said "since his wife died") a kind o' home-sick smile as he reached down his rifle, saying slowly: "I believe I'll take a hand in this——"

'Jerry never heard the end of the sentence—he had heard Dan talk like that before; he was at that moment unexpectedly called away. With one jump he was down the hole that he had once cut out to release his tail, and running out from under the cabin, at the end where there was a space between the ground and the first log, made by instinct for the river. As he was getting there the fastest he knew how, there came the report of a rifle-shot, and his business appeared even more pressing than before.

'He ran, and he ran, till he came to a river. Then he took a hurried glance over his shoulder to see whether that tail of his had followed along all right. It had, so he curled the end of it round to his lips, blew a loud whistle (you didn't know that was how they made that funny noise before, did you, Kid?), and turned a back-somersault into the stream.'

The Kid laughed, jumped, and wriggled with delight.

'Jerry has learnt the important lesson,' concluded Dave, with the air of a person who imparts a moral, even though that moral be a dubious one, 'that nothing useless was ever created; and now he finds that tail of his, next to his teeth, the most useful of his kit of tools—and he is glad enough that it *did* hurt! But, like those who have travelled, he now tells other ignorant beavers

strange stories which are sometimes rather fine and large. The pretty Miss Beavers all make eyes at him, and he grows more conceited and fatter every day. How the little baby-beavers laugh and kick when he tells them of his first attempt at damming! And their little eyes twinkle and expand as he tells them that the timber used grew already stripped of bark and limbs, ready for use. And the naughty little things get together, while their parents are all out hard at work, and vow secretly to run away the next still moonlight night (because they are afraid of the dark) to seek adventure; adding, in their pretty little beaverish way, "and we'll dam the expense."'

Almost before the Kid had time to cry 'More!' the strange, impulsive girl had turned up an injured face and volunteered the explanation of her lack of interest.

'Mother tells me *that* story,' she said.

Dave was astonished! He almost so far forgot himself in the presence of a woman as to exclaim, 'The deuce she does!' but he restrained himself.

'That's queer,' he said; 'devilish queer.'

And so it really was. It was an experience in his own early life; and years and years ago, when his eldest child was about another such a little 'chit' as Jim's, he had made it up into a little story to amuse him. Never since then had he told it until he knew the Kid. As he thought on these things he became perplexed . . . and sad. It *was* strange that this girl had heard it; and he could not get the thought out of his mind.

'What is your name?' asked Dave presently.

The girl shook her head; she didn't know that she had one.

'And your mother's?'

Mother was 'Mother' to her, she said, and she was 'my child' to her mother.

'Where do you live, then?' asked Jim, perplexed.

'Away over,' replied the girl, 'away over,'—and she pointed in the direction in which the creek flowed to the Maple River, 'in the cave.'

Both men knew all the ravines in that direction, but they knew of no cave. In regard to the distance she could tell them nothing. She and her mother lived there alone, as they always had; she had never before seen any other human being, and she didn't think Mother had, although sometimes she would tell funny

stories about a world and people across the plains; but sometimes they were giants and sometimes dwarfs—Mother was so funny! She didn't know the meaning of a father, and was sure she never had one; but of all this the men could make nothing.

'Well,' said Dave, presently, 'will you stay here to-night? And then in the morning you can take me to the cave. But how about "Mother"?'

'She went away to-day. Sometimes she comes back, and sometimes she doesn't; she's so funny . . . Out in the great world are there any more men—and little babies like this one?' she asked.

'A sight too many,' was Jim's unromantic answer.

It was settled that she would stay, and on the morrow take Dave to where she and her mother lived. In fact it seemed that she would rather stay with them and the Kid altogether.

Now came the child's bath-time. A large iron pot full of water had been steaming away upon the fire all this time; Jim fetched the wooden tub, which was also used for washing far less sacred things, and made all ready.

If this strange girl had been fascinated by many strange things this evening (and the quiet dog had not surprised her a little), now her face was a picture to look upon. As Jim undressed the Kid her eyes shone, and her whole face—she who had never even had a doll—was lighted up with a joy seldom seen on human countenance. And when Jim let her take the child and bath it all by herself her delight knew no bounds. She, who had never seen a child before, tended it so well, as well as any mother could; and she who knew nothing of the wiles of womanhood had already stolen the hearts of the only two men that she had ever seen. She laughed a great deal; the Kid enjoyed it; she made herself in a great mess and very wet, and was unutterably happy.

But at last the operation was complete, and once more they were all sitting before the fire. The Kid was never put to bed awake; she was always held on either Jim's or 'Uncle Dave's' lap before the fire, after being bathed, until she fell asleep, and was then put to bed, so that she never quite knew how she got there. Now she was on the stranger's lap, and the girl begged to be allowed to tell her a story. Jim was not even jealous that the child looked so contented in another's arms.

'All right,' he said, in his rough but well-meaning way, 'she'll be asleep in about two minutes, but cut in.'

The girl waited for no other invitation.

'Once upon a time,' she began—perhaps in imitation of Dave's style, or perhaps it was as her mother had told her—'there lived a good man named DAVE DUNLOW——'

Jim looked up quickly, and Dave jumped from his seat, for she had called him by name. The girl, noticing the commotion that her words had caused, had paused: and it was Dave who said 'Go on.' The Kid was fast asleep.

'Dave Dunlow,' repeated the girl, adding as a sort of an apology, 'that's what Mother called him, but she's so funny, his wife and three children—one a baby only a month old.'

Dave leaned forward on his seat, prepared not to lose a word that fell from the girl's lips.

'They were poor folks living on the frontier, and had to make a living as best they could; and though it wasn't exactly right, they traded whisky to the Indians——'

The girl repeated the story simply, as a child might have done; she was quite ignorant even of the meaning of many of the words.

'All went well for some time, and the Dunlows were becoming rich in cattle and horses; then they saw that it would be easy for them to make a good living without having recourse to the illicit trade in whisky, and so gave it up, keeping only one two-and-a-half gallon keg for medicine, or in case of snake-bites, or other accidents.

'Although after this the Indians were continually bothering and offering absurd bargains for the spirit, if only Dave would obtain it for them, nothing could have seemed more friendly than they were. But somehow, unluckily it became known among them that there was "fire-liquor" stored away in the house, and probably they thought in considerable quantity.

'One night the family were suddenly aroused by yells and the dancing of many feet, without. Dave sprang out of bed and threw open the door, not waiting even to catch up his rifle, for he was a brave man. The night was dark. There was a struggle, a cry, a dull thud—and then a heavy body fell across the floor. Mrs. Dunlow was instantly seized, thrown down upon the bed and lashed tightly to it; but she still held the baby in her arms.

'Then they lighted a candle that stood by the bedside, and dragged Dave's body up to the side of his wife, upon the floor . . . and she could see that he was dead. Then they began to search

the house; they were about a dozen "braves" in all. They entered the little room in which the two eldest children slept, and the poor captive woman fainted away.

'When she came to herself again there was a great chattering and brawling; the whisky-keg, with its top knocked out, was standing upon the stove, and they were helping themselves from it with a tin cup—all evidently in the last stage of drunkenness. Hard as it was to make head or tail of what they were debating, she could catch enough to gather that in the morning they intended to leave her strapped down as she was and set fire to the house. After a long time one after another began to lie down and fall into a heavy sleep—the whisky had done its work.

'How long Mrs. Dunlow struggled she did not know, but at last she was free! She raised her husband's head; his lips were warm . . . but he was dead. Stepping over several prostrate forms she gained the light, and entered the elder children's sleeping-room; they were asleep indeed!

'She wrung her hands, and looked down upon the sleeping "braves." She had the baby left, and could perhaps have escaped; but her one thought was of revenge! If there had been but half the number she would kill them as they slept, with the axe. She cared not for her own life, but meant that none should escape. She could fire the house! But then perhaps some would save themselves. Perhaps it was the devil whispered in her ear the word "Poison!"

'"Poison! Poison!" The word burnt into her brain! She remembered that Dave always had poison for the wolves and skunks, and that he kept it out in the shed "on account of the youngsters." The blood was like fire in her veins: it set her head on fire, and she knew not what she did. Ah! she would mix it with the whisky and then give each a drink. She was mad . . . mad . . . mad!'

Dave had risen, and now paced up and down the room.

The girl had paused, and looking down at the child, exclaimed:

'Why, the nasty little thing's asleep!'

'And has been this long while,' said Jim; 'else I should have stopped ye.'

Dave Dunlow still paced to and fro before the fire, striving in vain to collect his scattered thoughts, and to regain his presence of mind.

Jim took the Kid and put her to bed; and as the girl begged to sleep with the child, he gave up his own place to her. He fixed an old tarpaulin across from wall to wall; the girl wished them good-night, passed behind this temporary partition, and then the two men were alone.

It was some time before Dave came and sat down by the fire beside his partner, and when he did Jim looked across at him with a glance of kind inquiry.

Dave understood.

'I seem to have lost a thread or two, Jim,' he said, nervously. 'That "Dave" she told about was me, of course; you've seen that much?'

Jim nodded assent.

'Well, when I came to, that morning (I was 'most dead, *then*), there lay thirteen fine buck Indians, screwed up into all manner of shapes they were. And the two children were there—peaceful enough. But the wife and baby were gone.'

Dave broke down, and shading the side of his face nearest his partner, gazed into the fire. But Jim passed no remark, and presently he spoke again:

'I might have hunted longer than I did, but then, you see, I was *sure* that she had been carried off. I didn't, of course, think that those thirteen dead bucks cleaned out the bunch, and I couldn't think what had killed 'em.'

By a great effort the strong man roused himself, and added:

'I thought it was the whisky did it, Jim, honest! Powerful mean whisky it was: only stood me in two and two bits the gallon.'

Both men sat for a long time without speaking. Then Dave got up, and walking to the end of the room pushed aside the tarpaulin.

He watched the breath of the two sleeping figures come and go. The child was not much like, certainly; neither was the girl, in *features*. But her calm, trustful attitude; the heaving breast; the parted lips; the position of the loving arm about the Kid; all these had their expression: and he had looked upon this scene before—and loved it, long, long ago.

He bent down and kissed her forehead.

And what he whispered no man heard; and even had it been so, should not here be recorded.

III.

Soon after daybreak Dave and his girl-guide started off down the creek. The sun as yet was not sufficiently high up to shine in upon the valley; a deep irregular line lay along the cliffs on either side, dividing the sunlight from the shadow, and the valley through which they passed lay chill within the shade. A thin mist rose from the awakening ground. Two magpies, startled from an overhanging cedar, passed high overhead, and in making towards a jagged point on the opposite cliff with irregular and laboured flight, were now in the shadow, now in the sunlight, which intensified their metallic lustre and glanced again as upon a looking-glass.

A belated beaver hearing the approach of unwonted footsteps slid almost noiselessly into the stream, and rising again with a slight blowing sound some distance farther down, in a calm back-eddy, lay motionless and low upon the water, as though intent upon finding out what strange thing had come to pass; but as the footsteps again came nearer, he sank himself, full-length, beneath the surface: and only the accustomed eye could have told, by the faint ripple which seemed to linger at the spot, that he was still there, and would soon rise again in the same place.

But the eye of Dave Dunlow, usually so quick, had noted neither the one nor the other; the keen hunter's ear, long trained to catch and to distinguish the slightest sound, was dull this morning. His senses were away in a dim recollection, where his brain was busy striving, bead by bead, to thread the past. With eyes turned inward, he saw the recollection of the interior of a little cabin: a pretty woman, rather below the middle stature, in the full glow of youth and health, was vigorously rubbing clothes upon a wash-board: he saw two little children there too, but he could not conjure up what they were doing: and a tiny infant in a cradle. His ears, that listened to no outward sound, caught only the faint intonation of what seemed to him the softest and the sweetest voice . . . . and the words were always: 'Dave! Dave!'

The strong hand in which he held his rifle trembled, as the hand that holds a rifle should not tremble.

He was awakened from his reverie by the girl, who was now a few paces in advance, calling to him gleefully;

'This is where I saw you! I was over there,' pointing across the creek—'behind that——'

'Come back!' exclaimed Dave, in a tone of authority; 'a little lower down is where I set the bear-trap. I had 'most forgot. Come back.' And taking the girl's hand in his they advanced upon the spot together.

As they drew near, he exclaimed again:

'It's struck!—I thought I'd set it pretty well.' In a second the whole hunter's interest and excitement had come back to the man.

'This way,' he continued . . . . 'Don't look much like a bear's scuffling, do it?—not a very big one any way . . . . Here's the log-trail: come on.' A clear track where something heavy had been dragged along was visible, and Dave followed fast but cautiously upon it. 'That's a bear-track!' he exclaimed presently; 'and a big one too, ain't it? Don't follow along too close now—that's it . . . . Stand back!'

The girl needed not the command, for as he spoke she had heard a low deep growl, and had shrunk back to the verge of the stream. She saw Dave Dunlow raise the rifle to his shoulder, and fire. Then there was the sound of a heavy body breaking through the briars towards her; and she fled.

The bear had stood facing Dave, with its head down, when he shot, and he had aimed a little too high and had broken its back, or rather its spine, about at the juncture of the hind-legs. Its hind part dragging on the ground, it came towards him, mouth open; he did not trouble to reload in a hurry, waiting for the bear to be suddenly brought to a stand-still by the log of the trap—it had not occurred to him that he had heard no chain rattle; so the bear was close upon him before he realised that it was *free*. However, luckily for Dave, it was so far crippled that he could easily keep out of its way, and reloading quickly, he let the bear drag itself to within a few paces of him before he fired again: this time he shot it through the head, and merely jerking its head up, without either cry or groan it was dead.

Now, it struck Dave for the first time that he had heard no chain rattle, and that therefore the bear had already broken loose before he came upon the scene: but then the strange thing was that, being free, it had not made off at their approach. But when he came to examine the carcass, there were no marks of a trap upon any of the legs—the bear had not been caught at all!

Why then had it stayed to show fight?

This question Dave answered to himself as any other hunter would have answered it: the bear was feeding.

By this time the terrified girl had returned. This was the first bear that she had ever seen *dead*: and as she smoothed down its fur no doubt her mind was agitated by much the same thoughts that agitate far tamer girls. But strange to say, she had no thought of a cape, but of how a pair of breeches built of such material might become her, for winter wear, better than her buckskins.

'That bear must have been at something up there,' said Dave, turning to her, and pointing up under the cliff, where the bear had stood; 'he was on the feed; and that's about the only time they wouldn't run—before they're meddled with. Or likely it's another up there in the trap. But if it is she's dead—or mighty silent. You stay here—the thing won't bite ye!—and I'll investigate.'

Thus assured, the girl waited, while Dave Dunlow followed back the line in which the bear had come. He was some time gone; and as the dead bear offered at once the most convenient and the softest resting-place, she sat down astride the carcass, and amused herself by stroking down its neck and trying to make its little ears stand out. Sitting thus, in her romantic dress, and framed by such romantic surroundings, it was at once a pretty and a wild picture, indeed!

She waited on. So long it seemed—she didn't know how long! Then she fell into a day-dream:—What a fine strong, brave man Dave was; fancy not running away from a bear! She loved Dave—and Jim too, a little bit; but perhaps Jim would have run away. And the Kid—yes, that was the funniest, and the best, of all! Then she tried to imagine what the great world, and what other people, would be like. Hadn't they promised to take her, and Mother too, to see it? The time passed slowly by. Perhaps after all there *was* no other world, and they had only deceived her? If they had she would steal the Kid and run away. Perhaps even now Dave had gone off and left her. At the thought she clenched her little fists and shouted:

'Dave! Dave!'

Only the rocks above answered, 'Dave!! Dave! Dave.'

Again she called; and only the echoes came, and died away.

Then she threw her head down upon the bear's breast and sobbed. She seemed to go to sleep, and waking again directly

would have thought that all was but a passing dream. But Dave himself, in the flesh, stood over her.

'What is it, my child?' he asked—'you called me.'

There was something in his tone, so low, so kind, that she at once repented having doubted him.

'I thought you had gone away and left me,' she said, simply.

'No,' replied Dave quietly; 'I was here close by all the time.'

She noticed that his whole manner was changed, and softened. His eyes glistened; and she fancied somehow that he too had been crying: but that was impossible—her Dave wouldn't cry for anything; he was too brave!

She rose up, threw her arms about his neck, and kissed him: instinctively she seemed to know that he stood in need of comfort—and what greater comfort than to be encircled by soft loving arms! He kissed her in return; and a feeling came over her that she had never experienced before—so strange, that she released her arms quickly and sat down again on the bear.

Dave sat down beside her, and placed his arm about her waist:

'My child,' he whispered in a broken voice, 'Heaven has sent you to me, maybe. Will you go out with me, and Jim, and the Kid, into the great world?'

And she, clinging to him, answered vehemently:

'Won't I!'

Again all manner of strange visions began to pass, some right side up, others upside down, before her eyes. But Dave spoke again:

'Well, then, you run back to the shanty and look after the Kid, and send Jim to me. Tell him to bring an axe and a spade, and we will start to-night.' He passed a hand quickly across his face, and any other girl but this one would have known that this rough, strong man had brushed away a tear.

So soon as she was gone away to do his bidding Dave commenced to skin the bear; and as he plied the knife a single band of gold glistened on his little finger; it had not been there an hour ago. Barely had he finished the work when Jim came, axe in hand, and spade upon his shoulder.

'Hello,' he said, 'what's up now, then?'

Dave did not answer the question, but said, 'Follow me, Jim,' and from his tone his partner saw clearly that something *was* 'up'; 'you can leave the spade here.'

Jim put down the spade, and together they went towards the bluff. They were gone some time, and there were several sharp ringing echoes as of metal struck by metal; but when they reappeared they bore between them the body of a woman, and a broken bear-trap.

They wrapped the body in the bearskin, and then by turns began to dig beside it. Neither spoke, until Jim, who was digging, up to his waist in a narrow trench, leant upon his spade.

'I expect, Dave,' he said, in his practical way, 'she missed the gal last night, and was roamin' about huntin' for her, and happened to run against the bear-trap. That was about the size of it.'

And Dave answered: 'Likely, Jim . . . likely.'

That night the stars that look down for ever on the silent mountains blinked and looked again; and the moon, low in the heavens, turning a steady gaze to the west, saw first three laden pack-horses come up out of the darkness on to the 'divide'; then another horse with its rider; still another followed on, and this one bore a double burden; then presently, bringing up the rear, came yet one more horse and rider.

Silently they traversed the ridge, but when the foremost horseman commenced to descend the steep and ledgy eastern slope he dismounted, and starting the horse on alone, returned and took the bridle of the one following, to lead it.

'How's the Kid, child?' he asked.

'Fast asleep, Dave.' As the girl spoke she noticed, for the first time, the ring upon the hand that held her bridle, and the thought of her mother, the only person she had ever seen wear one, flashed upon her mind; so full had she been of the new world that she was now about to see.

'Where's Mother?' she demanded. 'You said that you would take her too, and——'

She could not see Dave's face, but he interrupted her.

'She's all right, my child . . . *She's gone on ahead.*'

She trusted and believed him, but yet did not understand. Just then Jim came up close behind them, and they turned their backs upon the 'divide,' upon the mountains, and upon the West for ever.

RIDDLES.

A RIDDLE is a general term for any puzzling question. Asking riddles has been from time immemorial a favourite source of social entertainment, and more especially so in the ages before the spread of literary tastes and habits. Every language has probably a word of its own domestic growth for this kind of inquiry, just as 'riddle' is a pure and native English word. But for the varieties of riddling questions, we do not find that languages have generally provided themselves with any corresponding variety of expression. The terms enigma, rebus, charade, conundrum, are words of Greek and Latin derivation, and these have become the common property of all literary languages; and there is another term, 'logogriph,' which is used by Ben Jonson, a word made by the French from Greek materials, and signifying word-fishing.

The early riddle exhibits in its composition some of the chief elements of literature. Prominent among these is the anthropomorphic or personalising tendency of early thought, which makes the riddle appear (in one of its aspects) as akin to the fable. This is well seen in the riddle or apologue of Jotham: 'The trees went to anoint a king over them, and they said unto the Olive tree: Be thou our king! But the Olive tree answered them: Shall I go and leave my fatness (which God and man honour in me) and go to be puft up above the trees? Then said the trees unto the Fig tree: Come thou and be king over us! But the Fig tree said unto them: Shall I leave my sweetness and my good fruit, and go to be puft up above the trees? Then said the trees unto the Vine: Come thou and be our king! But the Vine said unto them: Shall I leave my wine, which cheereth God and man, and go to be puft up above the trees? Then said all the trees unto the Thorn bush: Come thou and be king over us! And the Thorn bush said unto the trees: If it be true that ye anoint me to be king over you, then come and put your trust under my shadow; and else let fire go out of the Thorn bush and consume the Cedars of Lebanon.'

At the bottom of this is a perception of analogies in nature; the fruitful source not only of fable, but also of such contiguous

varieties as allegory, parable, and poetical similitude. If the analogies perceptible in nature, both animate and inanimate, produced fables, and those riddles that savour of the fable; so also did the same analogies which had been unconsciously reflected and stored up in metaphorical speech afford material for making cunning descriptions of things which should be scrupulously true and yet very hard to divine.

The best established form of riddle is probably the oldest; it is that which we still regard as the most legitimate and the most dignified kind, namely, the enigma. An enigma has been defined as a description which is perfectly true, but couched in metaphorical and recondite language which makes it hard to divine the subject. The following is a true enigma, though a homely example: 'Long legs, crooked thighs, little head, and no eyes.'

For a good enigma we must have a perfectly true description of a thing: every term used must be as scrupulously appropriate as in a logical definition; but it must be so ingeniously phrased and worded that the sense is not obvious, and the interpreter is baffled. There is vast room for the development of skill in this art, to make an enigma such that it shall be not merely obscure, but at the same time stimulating to the curiosity. A further step is to give it the charm of poetic beauty. This is quite germane to the nature of the enigma, which has a natural affinity with the epigrammatic form of poetry.

Samson's riddle was an enigma; so was that of the Sphinx. The two chief elements in the pristine enigma were metaphor and an appearance of incongruity, sometimes amounting to contradiction. The famous riddle of the Sphinx, which was solved by Œdipus, is entirely rooted in metaphor. 'What is that animal which in the morning goes on four feet, at noon goes on two, and in the evening goes on three feet?' Answer: Man. Here morning, noon, and evening are metaphors of infancy, manhood, and age; also, there is a metaphorical use of the word 'feet,' which is applied in one place to hands used for support, and in another place to a staff used as if it were a third foot. The puzzle in Samson's riddle is the result of incongruity joined with abstract terms:

> Out of the eater came forth meat,
> And out of the strong came forth sweetness.

In the following ancient Greek riddle there is something of both, but it rests chiefly on metaphor. 'A father had twelve

children, and each child had thirty sons and daughters, the sons being white and the daughters black, and one of these died every day, and yet became immortal.'

Planudes, a Greek monk at Constantinople in the fourteenth century, tells wonderful tales in his 'Life of Æsop' about the war of riddles that passed between Lycĕrus, king of Babylon, and Nectanebo, king of Egypt. The king of Babylon was always winner, because he had Æsop at his court, who was more than a match for the wit of the adversary.

Once, Nectanebo thought he was sure to puzzle the Babylonian, and his question was as follows: 'There is a grand temple which rests upon a single column, which column is encircled by twelve cities; every city has against its walls thirty flying buttresses, and each buttress has two women, one white and one black, that go round about it in turns. Say what that temple is called.' Æsop was equal to the occasion, and he explained it thus: The temple is the world, the column is the year, the twelve cities are the months, the thirty buttresses are the days, the two women are light and darkness.

An enigma of a homely nature, and which is probably of high antiquity, to judge not only by what tradition tells about it, but also by the fact that it is still found in some of the detached and less central parts of Europe, is this: 'What we caught we threw away, what we could not catch we kept.' There is an apocryphal legend that Homer died of vexation because he could not solve this riddle.

Here is a modern setting of the same idea. 'He loves her; she has a repugnance to him, and yet she tries to catch him; and if she succeeds, she will be the death of him.'

There have been epochs at which riddle-making has been more especially in vogue, and such epochs would appear to occur at seasons of fresh intellectual awakening. Such an epoch there was at the first glimmering of new intellectual light in the second half of the seventh century. This was the age of Aldhelm, bishop of Sherborne, the first in the roll of Anglo-Latin poets. He left a considerable number of enigmas in Latin hexameters, and they have been repeatedly printed. Aldhelm died in 709. Before his time there was a collection of Latin riddles that bore the name of Symphosius. Of this work the date is unknown; we only know that Aldhelm used it, and we may infer that it was then a recent product. The riddles of Symphosius were uniform in shape,

consisting each of three hexameter lines. The subject of the sixteenth in that collection is the book-moth :—

Litera me pavit, nec quid sit litera novi ;
In libris vixi, nec sum studiosior inde ;
Exedi Musas, nec adhuc tamen ipse profeci.

Translation : *I have fed upon literature, yet know not a letter ; I have lived among books, and I am none the more studious for it ; I have devoured the Muses, yet up to the present time I have made no progress.*

Here is one of Aldhelm's upon the Alphabet :—

Nos denæ et septem genitæ sine voce sorores,
Sex alias nothas non dicimus adnumerandas,
Nascimur ex ferro rursus ferro moribundæ,
Necnon et volucris pennâ volitantis ad æthram ;
Terni nos fratres incertâ matre crearunt;
Qui cupit instanter sitiens audire, docemus,
Tum cito prompta damus rogitanti verba silenter.

Translation : *We are seventeen sisters voiceless born ; six others, half-sisters, we exclude from our set ; children of iron, by iron we die, but children too of the bird's wing that flies so high ; three brethren our sires, be our mother as may ; if anyone is very eager to hear, we tell him, and quickly give answer without any sound.*

That is to say, seventeen consonants and six vowels ; made with iron stile and erased with the same, or else made with a bird's quill ; whatever the instrument, three fingers are the agents ; and we can convey answer without delay even in situations where it would be inconvenient to speak.

A younger contemporary of Aldhelm's was Tatwine, who was educated at St. Augustine's in Canterbury, and who for the last three years of his life (731–734) was Archbishop of Canterbury. He also left riddles in Latin, but they still remain in manuscript among the curiosities and treasures of the Cotton Library, except a few that have been selected for print as specimens. Dean Hook gave three in his 'Archbishops of Canterbury,' and of these three we will select one :—

Angelicas populis epulas dispono frequenter,
Grandisonis aures verbis cava guttura complent,
Succedit vox sed mihi nulla aut lingua loquendi,
Et bino alarum fulci gestamine cernor,
Queis sed abest penitus virtus jam tota volandi,
Dum solus subter constat mihi pes sine passu.

of which the translation, nearly verbal, is as follows:—

> Angelic food to folk I oft dispense,
> While sounds majestic fill attentive ears,
> Yet neither voice have I nor tongue for speech.
> In brave equipment of two wings I shine,
> But wings withouten any skill to fly:
> One foot I have to stand, but not a foot to go.

The answer is, in Latin, 'Recitabulum'; in English, 'An eagle-lectern.'

The riddling propensities of the seventh and eighth centuries propagated themselves throughout the remainder of the Anglo-Saxon period, and we have a collection of rather more than eighty riddles in English of the period before the Norman Conquest. These are mostly of the enigma type, and nearly all of them are in a poetical form.

The seventeenth century was a great era of riddle-making in France, and there are some considerable publications in French during that century, especially by Abbé Cotin, who is distinguished from the general company of riddle-makers by the fact that he owned the authorship of his enigmas, and, unless he has been maligned, did not spurn the credit of some that were not his. Generally the riddles of this period are without any author's name. The taste spread to England, and Jonathan Swift made some enigmas. Here are two of them:—

> I with borrowed silver shine,
> What you see is none of mine.
> First I show you but a quarter,
> Like the bow that guards the Tartar;
> Then the half, and then the whole,
> Ever dancing round the pole;
> And true it is, I chiefly owe
> My beauty to the shades below.
>
> Answer: The Moon.

> I'm up and down and round about,
> Yet all the world can't find me out;
> Though hundreds have employed their leisure,
> They never yet could find my measure.
> I'm found in almost every garden,
> Nay, in the compass of a farden.
> There's neither chariot, coach, nor mill
> Can move one inch except I will.
>
> Answer: A Circle.

These are so easy and transparent that their problematical element falls into the shade, and we are not puzzled at all; but

we are moved to admire very ingenious descriptions in graceful versification. This is the attribute of the epigram, and if the subjects of these were put at the head instead of at the foot, they would pass excellently well in a collection of epigrams.

The same may be said of the following, which is by the poet Cowper, and which calls for no unriddling:—

I am just two and two, I am warm, I am cold,
And the parent of numbers that cannot be told:
I am lawful, unlawful—a duty, a fault,
I am often sold dear, good for nothing when bought,
An extraordinary boon, and a matter of course,
And yielded with pleasure when taken by force.

Very different is the following about a bed, which is by C. J. Fox. It exhibits the principle of contradiction and paradox, and is good as an enigma and as an epigram also:—

Formed long ago, yet made to-day,
And most employed when others sleep;
What few would wish to give away,
And none would wish to keep.

I will add two of the paradoxical sort in plain prose:—'I went to the Crimea, and I stopped there, and I never went there, and I came back again.' Answer: 'A watch.' 'I went to the wood and I got it, and when I had got it I looked for it, and as I could not find it I brought it home in my hand.' Answer: 'A prickle.'

The enigma is as capable as the epigram of being made into a beautiful little poem. There are good examples in German by Schiller, and in English by Praed. The following is one of Praed's, which, not being by any means insoluble, is left to the divination of the reader:

In other days, when hope was bright,
Ye spake to me of love and light,
Of endless Spring and cloudless weather,
And hearts that doted linked together!

But now ye tell another tale:
That life is brief, and beauty frail,
That joy is dead, and fondness blighted,
And hearts that doted disunited.

Away! Ye grieve and ye rejoice
In one unfelt, unfeeling voice;
And ye, like every friend below,
Are hollow in your joy and woe!

After the enigma we must consider the rebus. This term is

simply the ablative plural of the Latin *res*, and signifies 'by things,' and its first application was to the putting of pictures for words or syllables. This first kind of rebus was known to the ancients, as may be seen in a paper by Addison in 'The Spectator,' No. 59. In rebuses alphabetic writing and picture-writing are often combined, as in an example quoted by Addison in the same paper, and as in the following from Fuller, which I quote after Webster :—

'He [John Moreton] had a fair library rebused with More in text and a Tun under it.'

When the Scythians were invaded by Cyrus, they sent him a messenger bearing arrows and a rat and a frog, which was a way of saying by lesson-objects that unless he could hide in a hole of the earth like a rat, or in water like a frog, he would not escape their arrows.

In its secondary sense the rebus is a sort of riddle in which the subject, or rather its name, is indicated by reference to objects either of experience or of history. Here follows a rebus by Vanessa (Miss Vanomrigh) on the name 'Jonathan Swift,' in which indications are given to guide the inquirer to the first syllable of Jo-seph, and then to the name of the prophet Nathan, and thirdly to the adjective 'swift' :—

> Cut the name of the man who his mistress denied,
> And let the first of it be only applied
> To join with the prophet who David did chide;
> Then say what a horse is that runs very fast,
> And that which deserves to be first put the last;
> Spell all then, and put them together, to find
> The name and the virtues of him I designed.
> Like the patriarch in Egypt, he's versed in the state;
> Like the prophet in Jewry, he's free with the great;
> Like a racer he flies, to succour with speed,
> When his friends want his aid or desert is in need.

The next form of riddle is the charade, which has a character that contrasts with the enigma; for while the enigma has its roots in the first primeval efforts of poetry and rhetoric, the charade is a product of the age of literary education, and it savours of the three R's. The subject is no longer a work of nature, but some element of grammar. The charade turns upon the letters or syllables composing a word; less often, but sometimes, on the words composing a phrase. The charade on the cod (to be quoted presently) turns on the three letters C, O, D.

There is a weekly contemporary which not only furnishes its readers with a periodical supply of charades, but also offers them substantial prizes for the solution. The following is a specimen of its craft in riddling, and for the solution we must refer our readers to the oracle itself, namely, 'The Magazine of Short Stories,' No. 130.

My First is made by City men—how very reprehensible!
Self-interest is the only plea that renders it defensible;
'Tis sometimes in the meadows seen—phenomenon botanical,
Not caused by feet of little folk, but growth that's cryptogamical.
My Second is remarkable, his character's so various,
He may be good, or bad, or weak, or timid, temerarious;
The crowning glory of a tree—mechanical or musical,
Or literary, legal—but undoubtedly political.
My Whole—supposed to be the first—pre-eminence detestable—
More often in the background lurks—that fact is incontestable:
In insurrections, mutinies, and mischief he's conspicuous,
Yet oftentimes, we know, contrives to make himself ridiculous.

There is a more elevated kind of charade, a cross between the charade and the enigma, which deals with grammatical elements like the charade, but describes with the seriousness of the enigma. Among charades of this secondary type we may group Canning's famous riddle on Cares:—

A noun there is of plural number,
Foe to peace and tranquil slumber;
Now any other noun you take,
By adding *s* you plural make,
But if you add an *s* to this
Strange is the metamorphosis:
Plural is plural now no more,
And sweet what bitter was before.

And even a punning one like the following: 'What is that which sweetens the cup of life, but which, if it loses one letter, embitters it?' Answer:—Hope and Hop.

The most eminent example of this species (or sub-species) is the beautiful riddle on the letter H, which was long attributed to Lord Byron, but is now known to have been written by Miss Catherine Fanshawe:—

'Twas whispered in heaven, 'twas mutter'd in hell,
And echo caught faintly the sound as it fell;
On the confines of earth 'twas permitted to rest,
And the depths of the ocean its presence confest;
'Twill be found in the sphere when 'tis riven asunder,
Be seen in the lightning and heard in the thunder.

'Twas allotted to man with his earliest breath,
It assists at his birth and attends him in death,
Presides o'er his happiness, honour, and health,
Is the prop of his house and the end of his wealth;
In the heaps of the miser is hoarded with care,
But is sure to be lost in his prodigal heir.
It begins every hope, every wish it must bound,
It prays with the hermit, with monarchs is crowned;
Without it the soldier, the sailor may roam,
But woe to the wretch who dispels it from home.
In the whisper of conscience 'tis sure to be found,
Nor e'er in the whirlwind of passion is drown'd;
'Twill soften the heart, but, though deaf to the ear,
It will make it acutely and instantly hear;
But in short, let it rest like a delicate flower,
Oh! breathe on it softly, it dies in an hour.

With these must be classed the charade on the Cod, wrongly attributed to Macaulay, of which mention has been made above.

Cut off my head, and singular I act,
Cut off my tail, and plural I appear;
Cut off my head and tail, and, wondrous fact,
Although my middle's left, there's nothing there.
What is my head? A sounding sea;
What is my tail? A flowing river;
'Mid ocean's depths I fearless stray,
Parent of softest sounds, yet mute for ever.

Here follows a charade which is fitted to serve for transition to the next species of riddle:—

My first denotes company;
My second shuns company;
My third summons company;
My whole amuses company.

The conundrum is the sort of riddle which is at present most in favour with young wits. It is a verbal puzzle, and the answer turns upon a pun, and, as Charles Lamb has said of puns in general, its excellence is in proportion to its absurdity.

A prevalent form of the conundrum is that which demands a resemblance or dissimilarity between two things that are incapable of comparison; the answer must therefore be based upon a play of words. But the conundrum is very miscellaneous.

Thus: 1. 'Why is a naughty boy like a postage stamp?' Answer: 'Because you lick him and stick him in a corner.' This provoked a counterpart.

2. 'What is the difference between a naughty boy and a postage stamp?' Answer: 'The one you lick with a stick and the other you stick with a lick.'

3. 'How do you know that birds in their little nests agree?' Answer: 'Because else they would fall out.'

4. 'Who gains most at a coronation, the king or his people?' Answer: 'The king gains a crown, the people a sovereign.'

5. 'What is the difference between a lady and her mirror?' Answer: 'One speaks without reflecting, the other reflects without speaking.'

6. 'When is it right to take any one in?' Answer: 'When it rains.'

7. 'Why is the figure nine like a peacock?' Answer: 'Because it is nothing without its tail.'

The origin of the name conundrum is obscure, but it seems to have been a slang word of the bogus Latin sort; and Skeat thinks that it may have been suggested by the Latin gerund *conandum*, to try.

This comprehensive term covers a variety of absurd questions and answers. There is a funny old book, printed in 1511, by Wynkyn de Worde, with the title, 'Demands Joyous,' that is to say, Merry Questions. Many of them are not calculated to be found out. Thus: 'What is that which never was and never will be?' Answer: 'A mouse's nest in a cat's ear.'

As the riddle usually turns upon metaphorical expression, and every kind of rhetorical figure, we naturally come to it with minds prepared to thread the labyrinth of verbal intricacies and subtle analogies. And out of this rises a new opportunity for the cunning questioner.

A secondary type of riddle is generated by taking advantage of the general impression, that the terms of the question will be ingenious and recondite and far-fetched. If every term of the question is plain, literal, and used in the properest sense, the guesser will be thrown off the scent, and will be hunting far afield while the game crouches at his door. Of this artless kind of artifice there are examples both enigmatic and charadish; here is one of the enigma type, which has before now mystified a whole circle of attentive riddle-lovers:—

Made in London, sold in York,
Put in a bottle, and called a cork.

The next is of the charade type, and it has a peculiar interest for me, because a friend of mine, with whom I discoursed of riddles, propounded it to me, with a little bit of his own personal

experience which took my fancy. This riddle (he said) was long ago proposed to him by a friend who could say the riddle but did not know the answer, and perhaps this condition made it take the deeper root in my friend's unsatisfied mind; and some years afterwards he recalled it to mind, and at the same time the answer flashed across him. The riddle is as follows:—

In my first my second sate;
My third and fourth I ate.

The result is often so different from what is expected, that although it may be true, and even very true, yet it produces the effect of a sheer 'sell.' 'Maria said to John, My father is your father, and my mother is your mother, and yet we are not brother and sister. What was Maria?' Answer: 'Ma-ri-a[r] was a liar.'

Among the literal sort are these: 'Why do ducks go under water?' Answer: 'For divers reasons.' This riddle was a novelty about the year 1845, and it soon provoked this counterpart, by no means equal in quality: 'Why do they come up again?' Answer: 'For sundry reasons.' 'Where is happiness always to be found?' Answer: 'In the dictionary.' 'What is that which is often found where it is not?' Answer: 'Fault.' 'What fish has its eyes nearest together?' Answer: 'The smallest.' 'When does a man sneeze thrice?' Answer: 'When he can't help it.' 'Which is the largest room in the world?' Answer: 'The room for improvement.'

It is not an accident that times of literary revival have been prolific in riddles. For it may be said generally that the powers of language which are exercised in riddle-making are the selfsame powers that are exercised in the art of literature, only that in making riddles those powers are drawn upon more continuously which in general literature are exercised with less intensity and effort. Metaphors, secondary meanings, adroit groupings which alter significations, all the powers that make words elastic, these are the faculties by which language is rendered plastic for the writer, and these are they that are brought into action by the riddle-maker with a more laboured accumulation of effects. With the progressive development of speech these powers increase, and there probably never was time or place in which the materials for riddles were so abundant as at the present time in the area that is covered by the English language.

THE FINCH FAMILY.

'WHAT are you in such a hurry to get your gun for?' I ask one of my friends, who fills the position of man-of-all-work in the place where I am staying for a time. His post, however, is rather a nominal one, for most of his time is spent in gardening.

I often have a chat with him, for I enjoy his quaint, original remarks, and although, as a rule, he is not expansive, when he does choose to talk he is always worth listening to. Besides this, he keeps his garden in excellent trim, and if there is one crop in it on which the old boy prides himself more than another, it is his peas. 'No one ken come up to 'em round about here,' he has told me more than once, with pardonable pride.

'What do I want with the gun? Hawfinches; they hawfinches in my peas!' he grunts.

As he leaves the tool-house I quietly follow, and place myself with him behind a low faggot-stack which stands in a line with the peas.

'Jest hear 'em! ain't it cruel!' he whispers. 'I hope the whole roost of 'em may git in a lump so that I ken blow 'em to rags an' tatters. If you didn't know what it was you'd think some old cow was grindin' up them peas. Ain't they scrunchin' of 'em! All right now, I ken see you grindin' varmints! Now for it!' Bang!

Three birds fall—young ones in their first plumage, which has a strong likeness to that of a greenfinch.

After picking the birds up we examine the pea-rows. There is no doubt as to the mischief the birds have done. The old fellow's own expression, 'grinding up,' is the best to convey any idea of the destruction that has taken place. Where the birds have been, nothing remains but the stringy portion of the pods of his precious 'Marrer fats.'

There is enormous power in the bill of the hawfinch, when the size of the bird is considered. The pea-pod is simply run through the bill, and the contents are squeezed out in the state of green pulp and swallowed.

'Varmints I call 'em, an' nothin' else,' is the remark my old friend makes, as he goes towards the tool-house and takes from a

shelf a hen hawfinch and two young ones, the former probably the mother of some of the birds that are about, if not, indeed, of the whole brood, her plumage showing that she has been sitting.

'People wants me to git 'em full-feathered old birds for stuffin', but, bless ye, ye might as well try to ketch weasels asleep. A cock hawfinch is about one o' the most artful customers as I knows on. The only time to git a clip at 'em is in winter under the plum and damson trees. They gits there after the stones, any amount o' stones lays jest under the ground, an' they picks 'em out an' cracks them easy. I gits plenty o' young ones when peas are about—the old ones lets 'em come, but they take precious good care they don't come off the tops o' the tree themselves afore they knows there ain't anybody about. Some says they're scarce birds. I knows they ain't—leastways not when my peas are ready to gather.'

In those districts of Surrey where peas are grown hawfinches are a perfect plague, more especially if wood or copse lands are near.

The hawfinch once seen will be remembered. He is a stoutly built bird with a very large and powerful bill. A child friend remarked he had a very large nose. His appearance reminds one at times of a small parrot, and again, he looks exceedingly pedantic. The delicate tints of his plumage (light reddish-brown, dark brown, grey, black and white) are well blended. The wings when open are beautiful, some of the feathers being in the form of an ancient battle-axe, reflecting tints of blue and green.

Before field naturalists became so common, the hawfinch, or 'haw grosbeak,' was considered a rare bird in many localities. It is certainly a very shy and retiring one, watchful and quick in all its movements. For this reason it is seldom seen by those who search for it for ornithological purposes. It breeds freely round the neighbourhood of Dorking—a fact which is continually being proved by the great number of young birds that are found there in various states of nestling plumage; some with the wing and tail feathers fully grown, others only just able to fly from the tree and back again. Much patient watching and a quick shot are needed to secure a pair of old hawfinches in full breeding plumage, but they fetch a price quite sufficient to encourage the attempt.

Although numbers of young birds are shot and buried in almost every garden where peas are grown, not half a dozen pairs of the old birds come into the hands of the bird-preservers in the

course of the year. Their keen light-grey eyes glance in all directions, no matter where they may be. I have often watched them in the winter months before the mania arose for destroying the fine old trees that lined the sides of some of our highways. There, amongst the crab-trees, bullaces, pickets, wild plums, and sloes, I have perhaps chanced upon a pair of hawfinches in the course of a five-mile walk; but then you can only see one side of the hedge as you go along.

My pleasure in watching them at work on the stones of the plums, or the pips of crab-apples was brief: in spite of the care I took not to startle them, they would suddenly fling themselves on to the road, perhaps to pick up gravel, and then as quickly jerk themselves back to the hedge.

The hawfinch is the quickest and most suspicious member of the finch tribes to be found in Great Britain. In winter his large bill is a light pinkish-brown, while in summer it changes to slate-blue. His nest, compared with that of other birds related to him, is simple in construction; but as it is of the bird I am writing and not of his domestic arrangements, I will not venture upon a description of it.

The greenfinch, called sometimes green grosbeak, and more often green-linnet, is one of our common birds. His plumage shows shades of green, yellow, and grey, with a touch of black. Of a less retiring and suspicious nature than the hawfinch, he builds his nest in gardens or shrubberies. Such confidence is, however, often misplaced, for if found by the gardener it is sure to be destroyed. Like the sailor, who is said to whistle for a breeze, the greenfinch calls for one, flying to the top of a tree at midday in the hottest summer, when other birds are dumb, and calling out at intervals in long-drawn notes, 'Breeze—breeze—breeze.'

'Oh, yes, you shall have a breeze,' says the gardener; 'I'll make one on purpose for you,' and he shoots him dead. Of the justice of this act the gardener must be allowed to be the best judge. He is probably bound in self-defence to protect his produce from the mischief wrought by birds of this sort. From my own experience, I may say that many of the most innocent-looking creatures are really the most destructive of the gardener's labour. When it is found that injury is done, and that in considerable quantity, the sentimental side of the question, to which our pity inclines, must give place to the practical.

The greenfinch is associated with my earliest childhood. On

the wild seacoast where we lived then he was a great favourite as a cage bird. Pets of that kind were much sought after at a time when books and amusements for the young were scarce, and any boy whose parents allowed him to keep a green-linnet was considered lucky indeed. The birds were carried about by the boys in their pockets when out of school. They were docile and affectionate creatures, and I remember well that amongst them was a tame sparrow which for intelligence and liveliness was not outdone by any of the others. Perhaps it is these early recollections that make me feel kindly disposed to the greenfinch whenever I see him or hear his well-known call for a breeze. If he is only wise enough to remain away from the garden, there are but few who will molest him. Fashion changes, and nowadays not many would keep the greenfinch as a cage bird. Setting on one side the fact that he, like others of his tribe, occasionally falls a victim to the sparrow-hawk or the kestrel, he has, I think, less to complain of than any of the finches.

A description of the bullfinch is hardly needed, so well is this beautiful bird with its brilliant scarlet breast known to dwellers both in country and town. The black, red, grey and white tints of his plumage, peculiarly pure and bright in his wild state, make him conspicuous as he flits about from one side of the hedge to the other, his soft and slightly mournful pipe betraying his presence in the distance. Beautiful as the strains from some wood fairy's flute might be is the soft sweet little song, all his own, with which the bullfinch cheers his mate as she sits on her nest. At such times he shows to the greatest advantage, with the jet-black feathers of his head raised, his breast puffed out, and his white tail displayed to perfection.

In a captive state the bullfinch is affectionate and intelligent, well repaying care and attention. The timidity natural to him in his wild state vanishes when once he has gained one's confidence. He will follow anyone about the house, up or down, and will go into his cage of his own accord, when he has had his range about.

One fine fellow I presented to my wife would sit on her shoulder and sing all breakfast time. When I held out my hand to take a cup of coffee, he would fly off her shoulder, scuttle over the table, and, getting in front of me, would scold his very loudest, as much as to say, 'How dare you bring your hand near my mistress!' This little performance over, he would fly back to her shoulder and sing his song, as if to assure her such behaviour

would not be repeated. In keeping the bullfinch as a pet it is well to keep no other creature in the same room, for his sensitive, affectionate nature can bear no rival. He gives you his whole affection, and his distress if he sees you talking to another pet is painful to see. In cases where his rival has been persistently noticed he has been known to pine and die.

If the bullfinch would but confine himself to the woods, fields, and hedgerows, where, except for hawks and bird-catchers, he is safe, all would be well with him; but his favourite place of resort is the garden, and that just at a time when the fruit-trees are beginning to bud.

It is nonsense to assert, as some have done in works on birds, that the buds of which bullfinches and other birds make such havoc have insects in them. It is romancing; garden trees, fruit-trees especially, are tended with the greatest care. No insects are allowed to gather on any of the leaves, either outside or in. The care taken with them is carried to such an extent that I have known men employed in conservatories for weeks in sponging each individual orange and lemon leaf.

The outside trees, especially the plum and cherry, receive the same care, though in a different way. These are the trees to which the bullfinch pays his most unwelcome attentions. Not satisfied with the buds of the wild cherry and the plum to be found in the hedgerows, he deliberately seeks those of the cultivated fruit, and in that way is a terrible hindrance to the gardener.

As a lover of birds from childhood, and now, at an advanced age, credited by some of my friends with having a severe attack of 'birds on the brain,' I would gladly exonerate my favourites from all blame. But the conclusion at which I have arrived, and which experience tells me is the true one, is, that some members of the finch tribe do a great amount of mischief in a garden. The bullfinch, in spite of his ruddy breast and his dainty flute-like song, is one of the gardener's special enemies. He gets shot down without mercy, and is left to rot beneath the trees which he has plundered of their buds.

The largest and rarest of the finch tribe is the pine bullfinch—a bird rare even in the pine-woods of Scotland, where it is supposed to breed, though about this I am not prepared to give an opinion. In plumage it rather resembles the crossbill. Being a Northern bird, it is probably migratory. All our common birds are more or less so, according to weather-changes. Vast numbers

come to us from the Continent, and return again if they escape the snares of the army of bird-catchers on the South Downs. The amount of small birds captured to supply the bird-markets is almost beyond belief. A bird-catcher with whom I had friendly relations for some time, and the accuracy of whose statements and observations I had no reason to doubt, gave me the number of dozens of birds caught and sold by him. He showed me his book where these numbers were duly entered, and side by side the receipts from them. I had much enjoyment in this man's society. Finding me to be a great lover of birds, but not a bird-catcher, he taught me all the secrets of his trade without reserve. These I keep religiously to myself. One day he told me of a strange bird he had picked up from the tangle on the beach. It was a turnstone—I recognised it at once from his accurate description, and my friend was as much surprised as pleased when I presented him with a portrait of the bird I had painted for him. That completely won his heart.

'Twink-twink, twing-twing, twink-twink! spink-spink-spink!' and then a joyous little song. There sits the singer, the handsomest chaffinch of them all, or, as he is called in Germany, the 'noble finch.' It is unnecessary to describe the plumage of this bird, so common and so well known, the pet of the schoolboy and the favourite of the costermonger, who will have his 'bloomin' chawfinch.' Many are the singing-matches in which he takes part, and the time and order kept by the chaffinches when singing together might be imitated with advantage by many a musical assembly.

The chaffinch is *the* bird of the Dials; and he really seems to enter into the spirit of the thing. No other bird used by the fowler calls so heartily in order to bring others within reach of net or limed twigs as the chaffinch.

He is a bird of high spirit, and, like a gamecock, answers a challenge directly. The green lanes and the elm-trees by the roadside are his resorts. I have seen him captured there many a time.

A man comes along the road with a small cage under his arm tied up in a handkerchief. In his hand he has a stuffed chaffinch in the attitude of challenging. Hearing the song of the chaffinch from the trees, he proceeds to fix his stuffed bird on a sloping portion of the trunk of one of the elms. A couple of feet or so below this he places some bird-limed twigs of whalebone, on the ground close by his little cage. He then gives out a rattling challenge,

answered at once by the bird in the tree, whose quick eyes search in all directions for his supposed rival. He soon discovers the singer, and his excitement at any other bird having the impudence to come and sing near his perch is extreme. Once more the challenge rings out; he can bear it no longer. Down he dashes, strikes the stuffed bird, causing it to sway up and down with the force of his stroke; and, falling on the limed twigs below, finds himself at the foot of the tree, a helpless captive.

I have known country lanes, before the Bird Protection Act came into force, cleared of chaffinches, to the great disgust and anger of the country people. Though obliged for the protection of their crops to shoot them at times, they are far from willing to see them captured in this wholesale way.

Real country folk are very tender in their dealings with the birds that live near them. In the course of my experience, extending over many years, I have never known a case of wanton cruelty occur in regard to wild birds. The labouring man, whose work so often lies far from the haunts of men, seeks companionship with the birds. Of these none is more friendly than the robin, who is sure to appear, however lonely the place.

Often in my own haunts, when watching for days together the movements and habits of some furred or feathered creature, the robin has come and made friends with me, becoming at last so intimate as to sit on the toe of my shoe and share my meal.

Birds are not the only creatures to be found thus fearless of man. An artist friend of mine, painting at his easel in a secluded spot in the Surrey hills, saw a large viper come and curl itself up close to his colour-box, too close by far to be agreeable. On looking round he saw another coiled up near to his easel. They would have done him no harm, but he thought it safer to put a greater distance between them and himself, and so left the spot.

Vipers are known to feed on young finches at times, for which reason no country lad will put his hand into any nest built in a tree before first looking into it.

But to return to our birds. The large thistles that used to grow on the waste lands were the favourite haunt of the goldfinch, who, as he hovered and flitted about, looked more like some tropical butterfly than a bird. The waste lands with their thistles are gone, and so are the goldfinches that fed on their downy seeds. A large portion of the common land is gone too. The moneyed class, who have bought up the copyholders by some arrangement

best known to themselves, secure parts of the real common land to themselves by buying up and throwing into it land that never belonged to it. Of late years the commons have become little more than tracts of ground given over to game-preserving. Notice-boards warn people off the ground that is legally their own in the most arbitrary way. Nay, I have even known people summoned before a magistrate for no other crime than that of using what from time immemorial has been their right. In many cases they have pleaded their own cause and won it. I have heard them tell their grievances with tears in their poor old eyes.

'Yes,' some of the old country folk will tell you, 'goldfinches is scarce now. They used to be about in hundreds one time o' day. You may go now for a month and not get a glint o' one.' I have asked them the reason of this, and they have answered, with a shake of their grey heads, 'They grups up the thistles' (with a forked thistle spud) 'what the birds live on, and flies in the face o' natur,' to turn it inter medder land—more fools they fur their trouble!' I know that such is the case; a small flock of goldfinches is a rare sight on a common in these days. Their true home is where stone-heaps and thistles are plentiful, where the flintgetter's old Flemish mare hangs her drowsy head, whilst the sun is high, in the shade of some clump of bushes—where the sandman's donkey rolls, and rasps the whole length and breadth of his tough hide on the sandy road of the common. In any tract famous for the growth of weed and tangle they lived and multiplied. Such spots are hard to find now, and the best place to look for goldfinches and siskins is near London, some five or six miles beyond the postal district, where the weeds thrive on land that has been cleared for building purposes. There, amongst stone-heaps and thistles, he still lives and breeds.

The bird-catchers, particularly those of the South Downs, capture them in thousands at the time of the out- and in-coming migrations. The men are well acquainted with a variety of goldfinch known by the name of 'cheval.' These birds I have seen frequently. One which I had in a cage showed but little difference in colour and habits to those generally caught, though it was very much larger in size.

This large variety is well known in the Southern counties as the 'cheval goldfinch.' They are not as numerous at any time as their smaller brethren. They used to be much prized by the bird-catchers, who would ask half as much again for a cheval in

good plumage as for any of the other birds. The price was not grudged, for they were fine specimens.

My own opinion is, that they are visitors from the Continent, where, under favourable circumstances, they have developed to their utmost limit. The fact that they are to a certain extent local strengthens this theory. The line of the Southern counties seems to be their limit, and the extent of their travelling, beyond which boundary I have never found them. It is to be hoped that in time the migrations of our most common birds will be more systematically worked out than they are at present. Amongst those birds who cross the sea are thrushes, larks, finches, and the tiny goldcrest, so tender that it dies if you hold it in your hand too long. The fishermen of the North Sea and of different parts of our dangerous coasts tell of birds taking shelter on and about their vessels when the weather is rough. They are left unmolested, and continue their journey as soon as the storm is over.

The bramble-finch, very like the chaffinch in shape, though more sturdily built, is a bird of a more Northern clime. In severe winters it migrates southwards in vast flocks, and is often seen associated with the chaffinch in the beech-woods, where the mast is his chief food. The winter plumage of the bramble-finch, or brambling, is coloured with shades of orange, brown, black, yellow and white, with here and there a touch of grey. His appearance in the country is very uncertain, his visits depending probably on the food to be got. Though the bramble-finches eat insects and seeds, their favourite food seems to be the beech-mast, and, as there is not a full crop of these every year, their visits are consequently irregular. Unlike the schoolboy, who hunts for beech-nuts when they first fall, the brambling waits until they have lain under the leaves for a month or two, when the outer covering has softened. I have known numbers of these birds visit the neighbourhood of Dorking and the Tillingbourne, and especially the woods of Wotton. Of late years they have become scarcer.

I kept a pair once, to observe their change of plumage in breeding-time. It was remarkable, the head and back of the cock bird turning jet-black. They were birds of a somewhat unpleasant disposition, so after a time I gave them their liberty.

The finches are bright and intelligent birds, very useful in their proper home, the woods and the fields; but those who value a full crop—or, in some cases, any crop at all—will be careful to exclude them from the garden.

BALLADE OF THE OLIVE.

The solemn throbbing of the drum,
The threat'ning trumpet's brazen blare,
The tramp of legions as they come,
The gleam of bayonets seen afar—
These things, no doubt, delightful are.
Who does not feel his pulses bound
'Mid all the pomp of glorious war?
Yet I—well, pass the olives round.

The battle's wild delirium,
The scent of carnage in the air,
The rifle's crack, the cannon's boom,
The rolling smoke, the lurid glare,
The lightning flash of sabres bare—
Where, though you search the world, is found
Delight that may with this compare?
Yet I—well, pass the olives round.

To die for altar, country, home,
To live and wear a cross or star,
To win, perhaps, a florid tomb,
A doubtful bust, or, yet more rare,
A statue in Trafalgar Square—
When thus the warrior's toil is crowned,
Who would not death and danger dare?
Yet I—well, pass the olives round.

ENVOI.

'The crust is best,' so you declare,
Whose jaw is strong, whose teeth are sound.
Take it; the crumb shall be my share,
For I—well, pass the olives round.

THE WHITE COMPANY.

BY A. CONAN DOYLE,

AUTHOR OF 'MICAH CLARKE.'

CHAPTER XXXIII.

HOW THE ARMY MADE THE PASSAGE OF RONCESVALLES.

THE whole vast plain of Gascony and of Languedoc is an arid and profitless expanse in winter, save where the swift-flowing Adour and her snow-fed tributaries, the Louts, the Oloron and the Pau, run down to the sea of Biscay. South of the Adour the jagged line of mountains which fringe the sky-line send out long granite claws, running down into the lowlands and dividing them into 'gaves' or stretches of valley. Hillocks grow into hills, and hills into mountains, each range overlying its neighbour, until they soar up in the giant chain which raises its spotless and untrodden peaks, white and dazzling, against the pale blue wintry sky.

A quiet land is this—a land where the slow-moving Basque, with his flat biretta-cap, his red sash and his hempen sandals, tills his scanty farm or drives his lean flock to their hill-side pastures. It is the country of the wolf and the isard, of the brown bear and the mountain-goat, a land of bare rock and of rushing water. Yet here it was that the will of a great prince had now assembled a gallant army; so that from the Adour to the passes of Navarre the barren valleys and wind-swept wastes were populous with soldiers and loud with the shouting of orders and the neighing of horses. For the banners of war had been flung to the wind once more, and over those glistening peaks was the highway along which Honour pointed in an age when men had chosen her as their guide.

And now all was ready for the enterprise. From Dax to St. Jean Pied-du-Port the country was mottled with the white tents of Gascons, Aquitanians and English, all eager for the advance. From all sides the free companions had trooped in, until not less than 12,000 of these veteran troops were cantoned along the frontiers of Navarre. From England had arrived the prince's brother, the Duke of Lancaster, with 400 knights in his train and a strong company of archers. Above all, an heir to the throne had been born in Bordeaux, and the prince might leave his spouse

with an easy mind, for all was well with mother and with child.

The keys of the mountain passes still lay in the hands of the shifty and ignoble Charles of Navarre, who had chaffered and bargained both with the English and with the Spanish, taking money from the one side to hold them open and from the other to keep them sealed. The mallet hand of Edward, however, had shattered all the schemes and wiles of the plotter. Neither entreaty nor courtly remonstrance came from the English prince; but Sir Hugh Calverley passed silently over the border with his company, and the blazing walls of the two cities of Miranda and Puenta della Reyna warned the unfaithful monarch that there were other metals besides gold, and that he was dealing with a man to whom it was unsafe to lie. His price was paid, his objections silenced, and the mountain gorges lay open to the invaders. From the Feast of the Epiphany there was mustering and massing, until, in the first week of February—three days after the White Company joined the army—the word was given for a general advance through the defile of Roncesvalles. At five in the cold winter's morning the bugles were blowing in the hamlet of St. Jean Pied-du-Port, and by six Sir Nigel's Company, 300 strong, were on their way for the defile, pushing swiftly in the dim light up the steep curving road; for it was the prince's order that they should be the first to pass through, and that they should remain on guard at the further end until the whole army had emerged from the mountains. Day was already breaking in the east, and the summits of the great peaks had turned rosy red, while the valleys still lay in the shadow, when they found themselves with the cliffs on either hand and the long rugged pass stretching away before them.

Sir Nigel rode his great black war-horse at the head of his archers, dressed in full armour, with Black Simon bearing his banner behind him, while Alleyne at his bridle-arm carried his blazoned shield and his well-steeled ashen spear. A proud and happy man was the knight, and many a time he turned in his saddle to look at the long column of bowmen who swung swiftly along behind him.

'By Saint Paul! Alleyne,' said he, 'this pass is a very perilous place, and I would that the King of Navarre had held it against us, for it would have been a very honourable venture had it fallen to us to win a passage. I have heard the minstrels sing

of one Sir Roland who was slain by the infidels in these very parts.'

'If it please you, my fair lord,' said Black Simon, 'I know something of these parts, for I have twice served a term with the King of Navarre. There is a hospice of monks yonder, where you may see the roof among the trees, and there it was that Sir Roland was slain. The village upon the left is Orbaiceta, and I know a house therein where the right wine of Jurançon is to be bought, if it would please you to quaff a morning cup.'

'There is smoke yonder upon the right.'

'That is a village named Les Aldudes, and I know a hostel there also where the wine is of the best. It is said that the innkeeper hath a buried treasure, and I doubt not, my fair lord, that if you grant me leave I could prevail upon him to tell us where he hath hid it.'

'Nay, nay, Simon,' said Sir Nigel curtly, 'I pray you to forget these free companion tricks. Ha! Edricson, I see that you stare about you, and in good sooth these mountains must seem wondrous indeed to one who hath but seen Butser or the Portsdown hill.'

The broken and rugged road had wound along the crests of low hills, with wooded ridges on either side of it, over which peeped the loftier mountains, the distant Peak of the South and the vast Altabisca, which towered high above them and cast its black shadow from left to right across the valley. From where they now stood they could look forward down a long vista of beech woods and jagged rock-strewn wilderness, all white with snow, to where the pass opened out upon the uplands beyond. Behind them they could still catch a glimpse of the grey plains of Gascony, and could see her rivers gleaming like coils of silver in the sunshine. As far as eye could see from among the rocky gorges and the bristles of the pine woods there came the quick twinkle and glitter of steel, while the wind brought with it sudden distant bursts of martial music from the great host which rolled by every road and by-path towards the narrow pass of Roncesvalles. On the cliffs on either side might also be seen the flash of arms and the waving of pennons where the force of Navarre looked down upon the army of strangers who passed through their territories.

'By Saint Paul!' said Sir Nigel, blinking up at them, 'I think that we have much to hope for from these cavaliers, for they

cluster very thickly upon our flanks. Pass word to the men, Aylward, that they unsling their bows, for I have no doubt that there are some very worthy gentlemen yonder who may give us some opportunity for honourable advancement.'

'I hear that the prince hath the King of Navarre as hostage,' said Alleyne, 'and it is said that he hath sworn to put him to death if there be any attack upon us.'

'It was not so that war was made when good King Edward first turned his hand to it,' said Sir Nigel sadly. 'Ah! Alleyne, I fear that you will never live to see such things, for the minds of men are more set upon money and gain than of old. By Saint Paul! it was a noble sight when two great armies would draw together upon a certain day, and all who had a vow would ride forth to discharge themselves of it. What noble spear-runnings have I not seen, and even in a humble way had a part in, when cavaliers would run a course for the easing of their souls and for the love of their ladies! Never a bad word have I for the French, for, though I have ridden twenty times up to their array, I have never yet failed to find some very gentle and worthy knight or squire who was willing to do what he might to enable me to attempt some small feat of arms. Then, when all cavaliers had been satisfied, the two armies would come to hand-strokes, and fight right merrily until one or other had the vantage. By Saint Paul! it was not our wont in those days to pay gold for the opening of passes, nor would we hold a king as hostage lest his people come to thrusts with us. In good sooth, if the war is to be carried out in such a fashion, then it is grief to me that I ever came away from Castle Twynham, for I would not have left my sweet lady had I not thought that there were deeds of arms to be done.'

'But surely, my fair lord,' said Alleyne, 'you have done some great feats of arms since we left the Lady Loring?'

'I cannot call any to mind,' answered Sir Nigel.

'There was the taking of the sea-rovers, and the holding of the keep against the Jacks.'

'Nay, nay,' said the knight, 'these were not feats of arms, but mere wayside ventures and the chances of travel. By Saint Paul! if it were not that these hills are over steep for Pommers, I would ride to these cavaliers of Navarre and see if there were not some among them who would help me to take this patch from mine eye. It is a sad sight to me to see this very fine pass, which my own Company here could hold against an army, and yet to ride

through it with as little profit as though it were the lane from my kennels to the Avon.'

All morning Sir Nigel rode in a very ill-humour, with his Company tramping behind him. It was a toilsome march over broken ground and through snow, which came often as high as the knee, yet ere the sun had begun to sink they had reached the spot where the gorge opens out on to the uplands of Navarre, and could see the towers of Pampeluna jutting up against the southern sky-line. Here the Company were quartered in a scattered mountain hamlet, and Alleyne spent the day looking down upon the swarming army which poured with gleam of spears and flaunt of standards through the narrow pass.

'Holà! mon gar.,' said Aylward, seating himself upon a boulder by his side. 'This is indeed a sight upon which it is good to look, and a man might go far ere he would see so many brave men and fine horses. By my hilt! our little lord is wroth because we have come peacefully through the passes, but I will warrant him that we have fighting enow ere we turn our faces northward again. It is said that there are four-score thousand men behind the King of Spain, with Du Guesclin and all the best lances of France, who have sworn to shed their heart's blood ere this Pedro come again to the throne.'

'Yet our own army is a great one,' said Alleyne.

'Nay, there are but seven-and-twenty thousand men. Chandos hath persuaded the prince to leave many behind, and indeed I think that he is right, for there is little food and less water in these parts for which we are bound. A man without his meat or a horse without his fodder is like a wet bow-string, fit for little. But voilà, mon petit, here comes Chandos and his company, and there is many a pensil and banderole among yonder squadrons which show that the best blood of England is riding under his banners.

Whilst Aylward had been speaking, a strong column of archers had defiled through the pass beneath them. They were followed by a banner-bearer who held high the scarlet wedge upon a silver field which proclaimed the presence of the famous warrior. He rode himself within a spear's-length of his standard, clad from neck to foot in steel, but draped in the long linen gown or parement which was destined to be the cause of his death. His plumed helmet was carried behind him by his body-squire, and his head was covered by a small purple cap, from under which his

snow-white hair curled downwards to his shoulders. With his long beak-like nose and his single gleaming eye, which shone brightly from under a thick tuft of grizzled brow, he seemed to Alleyne to have something of the look of some fierce old bird of prey. For a moment he smiled, as his eye lit upon the banner of the five roses waving from the hamlet; but his course lay for Pampeluna, and he rode on after the archers.

Close at his heels came sixteen squires, all chosen from the highest families, and behind them rode twelve hundred English knights, with gleam of steel and tossing of plumes, their harness jingling, their long straight swords clanking against their stirrup-irons, and the beat of their chargers' hoofs like the low deep roar of the sea upon the shore. Behind them marched six hundred Cheshire and Lancashire archers, bearing the badge of the Audleys, followed by the famous Lord Audley himself, with the four valiant squires, Dutton of Dutton, Delves of Doddington, Fowlehurst of Crewe, and Hawkestone of Wainehill, who had all won such glory at Poictiers. Two hundred heavily armed cavalry rode behind the Audley standard, while close at their heels came the Duke of Lancaster with a glittering train, heralds tabarded with the royal arms riding three deep upon cream-coloured chargers in front of him. On either side of the young prince rode the two seneschals of Aquitaine, Sir Guiscard d'Angle and Sir Stephen Cossington, the one bearing the banner of the province and the other that of Saint George. Away behind him as far as eye could reach rolled the far-stretching, unbroken river of steel—rank after rank and column after column, with waving of plumes, glitter of arms, tossing of guidons, and flash and flutter of countless armorial devices. All day Alleyne looked down upon the changing scene, and all day the old bowman stood by his elbow, pointing out the crests of famous warriors and the arms of noble houses. Here were the gold mullets of the Pakingtons, the sable and ermine of the Mackworths, the scarlet bars of the Wakes, the gold and blue of the Grosvenors, the cinque-foils of the Cliftons, the annulets of the Musgraves, the silver pinions of the Beauchamps, the crosses of the Molineux, the bloody chevron of the Woodhouses, the red and silver of the Worsleys, the swords of the Clarks, the boars'-heads of the Lucies, the crescents of the Boyntons, and the wolf and dagger of the Lipscombs. So through the sunny winter day the chivalry of England poured down through the dark pass of Roncesvalles to the plains of Spain.

It was on a Monday that the Duke of Lancaster's division passed safely through the Pyrenees. On the Tuesday there was a bitter frost, and the ground rung like iron beneath the feet of the horses; yet ere evening the prince himself, with the main body of his army, had passed the gorge and united with his vanguard at Pampeluna. With him rode the King of Majorca, the hostage King of Navarre, and the fierce Don Pedro of Spain, whose pale blue eyes gleamed with a sinister light as they rested once more upon the distant peaks of the land which had disowned him. Under the royal banners rode many a bold Gascon baron and many a hot-blooded islander. Here were the high stewards of Aquitaine, of Saintonge, of La Rochelle, of Quercy, of Limousin, of Agenois, of Poitou, and of Bigorre, with the banners and musters of their provinces. Here also were the valiant Earl of Angus, Sir Thomas Banaster with his garter over his greave, Sir Nele Loring, second cousin to Sir Nigel, and a long column of Welsh footmen who marched under the red banner of Merlin. From dawn to sundown the long train wound through the pass, their breath reeking up upon the frosty air like the steam from a cauldron.

The weather was less keen upon the Wednesday, and the rear-guard made good their passage, with the bombards and the waggon-train. Free companions and Gascons made up this portion of the army to the number of ten thousand men. The fierce Sir Hugh Calverley, with his yellow mane, and the rugged Sir Robert Knolles, with their war-hardened and veteran companies of English bowmen, headed the long column; while behind them came the turbulent bands of the Bastard of Breteuil, Nandon de Bagerant, one-eyed Camus, Black Ortingo, La Nuit, and others whose very names seem to smack of hard hands and ruthless deeds. With them also were the pick of the Gascon chivalry—the old Duc d'Armagnac, his nephew Lord d'Albret, brooding and scowling over his wrongs, the giant Oliver de Clisson, the Captal de Buch, pink of knighthood, the sprightly Sir Perducas d'Albret, the red-bearded Lord d'Esparre, and a long train of needy and grasping border nobles, with long pedigrees and short purses, who had come down from their hillside strongholds, all hungering for the spoils and the ransoms of Spain. By the Thursday morning the whole army was encamped in the Vale of Pampeluna, and the prince had called his council to meet him in the old palace of the ancient city of Navarre.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

HOW THE COMPANY MADE SPORT IN THE VALE OF PAMPELUNA.

WHILST the council was sitting in Pampeluna the White Company, having encamped in a neighbouring valley, close to the companies of La Nuit and of Black Ortingo, were amusing themselves with sword-play, wrestling, and shooting at the shields, which they had placed upon the hillside to serve them as butts. The younger archers, with their coats of mail thrown aside, their brown or flaxen hair tossing in the wind, and their jerkins turned back to give free play to their brawny chests and arms, stood in lines, each loosing his shaft in turn, while Johnston, Aylward, Black Simon, and half-a-score of the elders lounged up and down with critical eyes, and a word of rough praise or of curt censure for the marksmen. Behind stood knots of Gascon and Brabant crossbowmen from the companies of Ortingo and of La Nuit, leaning upon their unsightly weapons and watching the practice of the Englishmen.

'A good shot, Hewett, a good shot!' said old Johnston to a young bowman, who stood with his bow in his left hand, gazing with parted lips after his flying shaft. 'You see, she finds the ring, as I knew she would from the moment that your string twanged.'

'Loose it easy, steady, and yet sharp,' said Aylward. 'By my hilt! mon gar., it is very well when you do but shoot at a shield, but when there is a man behind the shield, and he rides at you with wave of sword and glint of eyes from behind his vizor, you may find him a less easy mark.'

'It is a mark that I have found before now,' answered the young bowman.

'And shall again, camarade, I doubt not. But holà! Johnston, who is this who holds his bow like a crow-keeper?'

'It is Silas Peterson, of Horsham. Do not wink with one eye and look with the other, Silas, and do not hop and dance after you shoot, with your tongue out, for that will not speed it upon its way. Stand straight and firm, as God made you. Move not the bow arm, and steady with the drawing hand!'

'I' faith,' said Black Simon, 'I am a spearman myself, and am more fitted for hand-strokes than for such work as this. Yet I have spent my days among bowmen, and I have seen many a brave shaft sped. I will not say but that we have some good marksmen here, and that this Company would be accounted a fine body of

archers at any time or place. Yet I do not see any men who bend so strong a bow or shoot as true a shaft as those whom I have known.'

'You say sooth,' said Johnston, turning his seamed and grizzled face upon the man-at-arms. 'See yonder,' he added, pointing to a bombard which lay within the camp; 'there is what hath done scath to good bowmanship, with its filthy soot and foolish roaring mouth. I wonder that a true knight, like our prince, should carry such a scurvy thing in his train. Robin, thou red-headed lurden, how oft must I tell thee not to shoot straight with a quarter-wind blowing across the mark?'

'By these ten finger-bones! there were some fine bowmen at the intaking of Calais,' said Aylward. 'I well remember that, on occasion of an outfall, a Genoan raised his arm over his mantlet, and shook it at us, a hundred paces from our line. There were twenty who loosed shafts at him, and when the man was afterwards slain it was found that he had taken eighteen through his fore-arm.'

'And I can call to mind,' remarked Johnston, 'that when the great cog "Christopher," which the French had taken from us, was moored two hundred paces from the shore, two archers, little Robin Withstaff and Elias Baddlesmere, in four shots each cut every strand of her hempen anchor-cord, so that she well-nigh came upon the rocks.'

'Good shooting, i' faith, rare shooting!' said Black Simon. 'But I have seen you, Johnston, and you, Samkin Aylward, and one or two others who are still with us, shoot as well as the best. Was it not you, Johnston, who took the fat ox at Finsbury butts against the pick of London town?'

A sunburnt and black-eyed Brabanter had stood near the old archers, leaning upon a large crossbow and listening to their talk, which had been carried on in that hybrid camp dialect which both nations could understand. He was a squat, bull-necked man, clad in the iron helmet, mail tunic, and woollen gambesson of his class. A jacket with hanging sleeves, slashed with velvet at the neck and wrists, showed that he was a man of some consideration, an under-officer, or file-leader of his company.

'I cannot think,' said he, 'why you English should be so fond of your six-foot stick. If it amuse you to bend it, well and good; but why should I strain and pull, when my little moulinet will do all for me, and better than I can do it for myself?'

'I have seen good shooting with the prod and with the latch,' said Aylward, 'but, by my hilt! camarade, with all respect to you and to your bow, I think that is but a woman's weapon, which a woman can point and loose as easily as a man.'

'I know not about that,' answered the Brabanter, 'but this I know, that though I have served for fourteen years, I have never yet seen an Englishman do aught with the long-bow which I could not do better with my arbalest. By the three kings! I would even go further, and say that I have done things with my arbalest which no Englishman could do with his long-bow.'

'Well said, mon gar.,' cried Aylward. 'A good cock has ever a brave call. Now, I have shot little of late, but there is Johnston here who will try a round with you for the honour of the Company.'

'And I will lay a gallon of Jurançon wine upon the long-bow,' said Black Simon, 'though I had rather, for my own drinking, that it were a quart of Twynham ale.'

'I take both your challenge and your wager,' said the man of Brabant, throwing off his jacket and glancing keenly about him with his black twinkling eyes. 'I cannot see any fitting mark, for I care not to waste a bolt upon these shields, which a drunken boor could not miss at a village kermesse.'

'This is a perilous man,' whispered an English man-at-arms, plucking at Aylward's sleeve. 'He is the best marksman of all the crossbow companies, and it was he who brought down the Constable de Bourbon at Brignais. I fear that your man will come by little honour with him.'

'Yet I have seen Johnston shoot this twenty years, and I will not flinch from it. How say you, old war-hound, will you not have a flight shot or two with this springald?'

'Tut, tut, Aylward,' said the old bowman. 'My day is past, and it is for the younger ones to hold what we have gained. I take it unkindly of thee, Samkin, that thou shouldst call all eyes thus upon a broken bowman who could once shoot a fair shaft. Let me feel that bow, Wilkins! It is a Scotch bow, I see, for the upper nock is without and the lower within. By the black rood! it is a good piece of yew, well nocked, well strung, well waxed, and very joyful to the feel. I think even now that I might hit any large and goodly mark with a bow like this. Turn thy quiver to me, Aylward. I love an ash arrow pieced with cornel-wood for a roving shaft.

'By my hilt! and so do I,' cried Aylward. 'These three gander-winged shafts are such.'

'So I see, comrade. It has been my wont to choose a saddle-backed feather for a dead shaft, and a swine-backed for a smooth flier. I will take the two of them. Ah! Samkin, lad, the eye grows dim and the hand less firm as the years pass.'

'Come then, are you not ready?' said the Brabanter, who had watched with ill-concealed impatience the slow and methodic movements of his antagonist.

'I will venture a rover with you, or try long-butts or hoyles,' said old Johnston. 'To my mind the long-bow is a better weapon than the arbalest, but it may be ill for me to prove it.'

'So I think,' quoth the other with a sneer. He drew his moulinet from his girdle, and fixing it to the windlass, he drew back the powerful double cord until it had clicked into the catch. Then from his quiver he drew a short thick quarrel, which he placed with the utmost care upon the groove. Word had spread of what was going forward, and the rivals were already surrounded, not only by the English archers of the Company, but by hundreds of arbalestiers and men-at-arms from the bands of Ortingo and La Nuit, to the latter of which the Brabanter belonged.

'There is a mark yonder on the hill,' said he; 'mayhap you can discern it.'

'I see something,' answered Johnston, shading his eyes with his hand; 'but it is a very long shoot.'

'A fair shoot—a fair shoot! Stand aside, Arnaud, lest you find a bolt through your gizzard. Now, comrade, I take no flight shot, and I give you the vantage of watching my shaft.'

As he spoke he raised his arbalest to his shoulder and was about to pull the trigger, when a large grey stork flapped heavily into view, skimming over the brow of the hill, and then soaring up into the air to pass the valley. Its shrill and piercing cries drew all eyes upon it, and, as it came nearer, a dark spot which circled above it resolved itself into a peregrine falcon, which hovered over its head, poising itself from time to time, and watching its chance of closing with its clumsy quarry. Nearer and nearer came the two birds, all absorbed in their own contest, the stork wheeling upwards, the hawk still fluttering above it, until they were not a hundred paces from the camp. The Brabanter raised his weapon to the sky, and there came the

short deep twang of his powerful string. His bolt struck the stork just where its wing meets the body, and the bird whirled aloft in a last convulsive flutter before falling wounded and flapping to the earth. A roar of applause burst from the cross-bowmen; but at the instant that the bolt struck its mark old Johnston, who had stood listlessly with arrow on string, bent his bow and sped a shaft through the body of the falcon. Whipping the other from his belt, he sent it skimming some few feet from the earth with so true an aim that it struck and transfixed the stork for the second time ere it could reach the ground. A deep-chested shout of delight burst from the archers at the sight of this double feat, and Aylward, dancing with joy, threw his arms round the old marksman and embraced him with such vigour that their mail tunics clanged again.

'Ah! camarade,' he cried, 'you shall have a stoup with me for this! What then, old dog, would not the hawk please thee, but thou must have the stork as well. Oh, to my heart again!'

'It is a pretty piece of yew, and well strung,' said Johnston with a twinkle in his deep-set grey eyes. 'Even an old broken bowman might find the clout with a bow like this.'

'You have done very well,' remarked the Brabanter in a surly voice. 'But it seems to me that you have not yet shown yourself to be a better marksman than I, for I have struck that at which I aimed, and, by the three kings! no man can do more.'

'It would ill beseem me to claim to be a better marksman,' answered Johnston, 'for I have heard great things of your skill. I did but wish to show that the long-bow could do that which an arbalest could not do, for you could not with your moulinet have your string ready to speed another shaft ere the bird drop to the earth.'

'In that you have vantage,' said the crossbowman. 'By Saint James! it is now my turn to show you where my weapon has the better of you. I pray you to draw a flight shaft with all your strength down the valley, that we may see the length of your shoot.'

'That is a very strong prod of yours,' said Johnston, shaking his grizzled head as he glanced at the thick arch and powerful strings of his rival's arbalest. 'I have little doubt that you can overshoot me, and yet I have seen bowmen who could send a cloth-yard arrow further than you could speed a quarrel.'

'So I have heard,' remarked the Brabanter; 'and yet it is a

strange thing that these wondrous bowmen are never where I chance to be. Pace out the distances with a wand at every five-score, and do you, Arnaud, stand at the fifth wand to carry back my bolts to me.'

A line was measured down the valley, and Johnston, drawing an arrow to the very head, sent it whistling over the row of wands.

'Bravely drawn! A rare shoot!' shouted the bystanders. 'It is well up to the fourth mark.'

'By my hilt! it is over it!' cried Aylward. 'I can see where they have stooped to gather up the shaft.'

'We shall hear anon,' said Johnston quietly, and presently a young archer came running to say that the arrow had fallen twenty paces beyond the fourth wand.

'Four hundred paces and a score,' cried Black Simon. 'I' faith it is a very long flight. Yet wood and steel may do more than flesh and blood.'

The Brabanter stepped forward with a smile of conscious triumph, and loosed the cord of his weapon. A shout burst from his comrades as they watched the swift and lofty flight of the heavy bolt.

'Over the fourth!' groaned Aylward. 'By my hilt! I think that it is well up to the fifth.'

'It is over the fifth!' cried a Gascon loudly, and a comrade came running with waving arms to say that the bolt had pitched eight paces beyond the mark of the five hundred.

'Which weapon hath the vantage now?' cried the Brabanter, strutting proudly about with shouldered arbalest, amid the applause of his companions.

'You can overshoot me,' said Johnston gently.

'Or any other man who ever bent a long-bow,' cried his victorious adversary.

'Nay, not so fast,' said a huge archer, whose mighty shoulders and red head towered high above the throng of his comrades. 'I must have a word with you ere you crow so loudly. Where is my little popper? By sainted Dick of Hampole! it will be a strange thing if I cannot outshoot that thing of thine, which to my eyes is more like a rat-trap than a bow. Will you try another flight, or do you stand by your last?'

'Five hundred and eight paces will serve my turn,' answered the Brabanter, looking askance at this new opponent.

'Tut, John,' whispered Aylward, 'you never were a marksman. Why must you thrust your spoon into this dish?'

'Easy and slow, Aylward. There are very many things which I cannot do, but there are also one or two which I have the trick of. It is in my mind that I can beat this shoot, if my bow will but hold together.'

'Go on, old babe of the woods!' 'Have at it, Hampshire!' cried the archers laughing.

'By my soul! you may grin,' cried John. 'But I learned how to make the long shoot from old Hob Miller of Milford.' He took up a great black bow, as he spoke, and sitting down upon the ground he placed his two feet on either end of the stave. With an arrow fitted, he then pulled the string towards him with both hands until the head of the shaft was level with the wood. The great bow creaked and groaned and the cord vibrated with the tension.

'Who is this fool's-head who stands in the way of my shoot?' said he, craning up his neck from the ground.

'He stands on the further side of my mark,' answered the Brabanter, 'so he has little to fear from you.'

'Well, the saints assoil him!' cried John. 'Though I think he is over near to be scathed.' As he spoke he raised his two feet, with the bow-stave upon their soles, and his cord twanged with a deep rich hum which might be heard across the valley. The measurer in the distance fell flat upon his face, and then, jumping up again, began to run in the opposite direction.

'Well shot, old lad! It is indeed over his head,' cried the bowmen.

'Mon Dieu!' exclaimed the Brabanter, 'who ever saw such a shoot?'

'It is but a trick,' quoth John. 'Many a time have I won a gallon of ale by covering a mile in three flights down Wilverley Chase.'

'It fell a hundred and thirty paces beyond the fifth mark,' shouted an archer in the distance.

'Six hundred and thirty paces! Mon Dieu! but that is a shoot! And yet it says nothing for your weapon, mon gros camarade, for it was by turning yourself into a crossbow that you did it.'

'By my hilt! there is truth in that,' cried Aylward. 'And now, friend, I will myself show you a vantage of the long-bow. I pray

you to speed a bolt against yonder shield with all your force. It is an inch of elm with bull's hide over it.'

'I scarce shot as many shafts at Brignais,' growled the man of Brabant; 'though I found a better mark there than a cantle of bull's hide. But what is this, Englishman? The shield hangs not one hundred paces from me, and a blind man could strike it.' He screwed up his string to the furthest pitch, and shot his quarrel at the dangling shield. Aylward, who had drawn an arrow from his quiver, carefully greased the head of it, and sped it at the same mark.

'Run, Wilkins,' quoth he, 'and fetch me the shield.'

Long were the faces of the Englishmen and broad the laugh of the crossbowmen as the heavy mantlet was carried towards them, for there in the centre was the thick Brabant bolt driven deeply into the wood, while there was neither sign nor trace of the cloth-yard shaft.

'By the three kings!' cried the Brabanter, 'this time at least there is no gainsaying which is the better weapon, or which the truer hand that held it. You have missed the shield, Englishman.'

'Tarry a bit! Tarry a bit, mon gar.!' quoth Aylward, and turning round the shield he showed a round clear hole in the wood at the back of it. 'My shaft has passed through it, camarade, and I trow the one which goes through is more to be feared than that which bides on the way.'

The Brabanter stamped his foot with mortification, and was about to make some angry reply, when Alleyne Edricson came riding up to the crowds of archers.

'Sir Nigel will be here anon,' said he, 'and it is his wish to speak with the Company.'

In an instant order and method took the place of general confusion. Bows, steel caps, and jacks were caught up from the grass. A long cordon cleared the camp of all strangers, while the main body fell into four lines with under-officers and file-leaders in front and on either flank. So they stood, silent and motionless, when their leader came riding towards them, his face shining and his whole small figure swelling with the news which he bore.

'Great honour has been done to us, men,' cried he: 'for, of all the army, the prince has chosen us out that we should ride onwards into the lands of Spain to spy upon our enemies. Yet, as there are many of us, and as the service may not be to the liking

of all, I pray that those will step forward from the ranks who have the will to follow me.'

There was a rustle among the bowmen, but when Sir Nigel looked up at them no man stood forward from his fellows, but the four lines of men stretched unbroken as before. Sir Nigel blinked at them in amazement, and a look of the deepest sorrow shadowed his face.

'That I should have lived to see the day!' he cried. 'What! not one——'

'My fair lord,' whispered Alleyne, 'they have all stepped forward.'

'Ah, by Saint Paul! I see how it is with them. I could not think that they would desert me. We start at dawn to-morrow, and ye are to have the horses of Sir Robert Cheney's company. Be ready, I pray ye, at early cock-crow.'

A buzz of delight burst from the archers, as they broke their ranks and ran hither and thither, whooping and cheering like boys who have news of a holiday. Sir Nigel gazed after them with a smiling face, when a heavy hand fell upon his shoulder.

'What ho! my knight-errant of Twynham!' said a voice. 'You are off to Ebro, I hear; and, by the holy fish of Tobias! you must take me under your banner.'

'What! Sir Oliver Buttesthorn!' cried Sir Nigel. 'I had heard that you were come into camp, and had hoped to see you. Glad and proud shall I be to have you with me.'

'I have a most particular and weighty reason for wishing to go,' said the sturdy knight.

'I can well believe it,' returned Sir Nigel; 'I have met no man who is quicker to follow where honour leads.'

'Nay, it is not for honour that I go, Nigel.'

'For what then?'

'For pullets.'

'Pullets?'

'Yes, for the rascal vanguard have cleared every hen from the country-side. It was this very morning that Norbury, my squire, lamed his horse in riding round in quest of one, for we have a bag of truffles, and nought to eat with them. Never have I seen such locusts as this vanguard of ours. Not a pullet shall we see until we are in front of them; so I shall leave my Winchester runagates to the care of the provost-marshal, and I shall hie south with you, Nigel, with my truffles at my saddle-bow.'

'Oliver, Oliver, I know you over well,' said Sir Nigel, shaking his head, and the two old soldiers rode off together to their pavilion.

CHAPTER XXXV.

HOW SIR NIGEL HAWKED AT AN EAGLE.

To the south of Pampeluna in the kingdom of Navarre there stretched a high table-land, rising into bare, sterile hills, brown or grey in colour, and strewn with huge boulders of granite. On the Gascon side of the great mountains there had been running streams, meadows, forests, and little nestling villages. Here, on the contrary, were nothing but naked rocks, poor pasture, and savage stone-strewn wastes. Gloomy defiles or barrancas intersected this wild country with mountain torrents dashing and foaming between their rugged sides. The clatter of waters, the scream of the eagle, and the howling of wolves were the only sounds which broke upon the silence in that dreary and inhospitable region.

Through this wild country it was that Sir Nigel and his Company pushed their way, riding at times through vast defiles where the brown gnarled cliffs shot up on either side of them, and the sky was but a long winding blue slit between the clustering lines of box which fringed the lips of the precipices; or again leading their horses along the narrow and rocky paths worn by the muleteers upon the edges of the chasm, where under their very elbows they could see the white streak which marked the *gave* which foamed a thousand feet below them. So for two days they pushed their way through the wild places of Navarre, past Fuente, over the rapid Ega, through Estella, until upon a winter's evening the mountains fell away from in front of them, and they saw the broad blue Ebro curving betwixt its double line of homesteads and of villages. The fishers of Viana were aroused that night by rough voices speaking in a strange tongue, and ere morning Sir Nigel and his men had ferried the river and were safe upon the land of Spain.

All the next day they lay in a pine wood near to the town of Logrono, resting their horses and taking counsel as to what they should do. Sir Nigel had with him Sir William Felton, Sir Oliver Buttesthorn, stout old Sir Simon Burley, the Scotch knight-

errant, the Earl of Angus, and Sir Richard Causton, all accounted among the bravest knights in the army, together with sixty veteran men-at-arms, and three hundred and twenty archers. Spies had been sent out in the morning, and returned after nightfall to say that the King of Spain was encamped some fourteen miles off in the direction of Burgos, having with him twenty thousand horse and forty-five thousand foot. A dry-wood fire had been lit, and round this the leaders crouched, the glare beating upon their rugged faces, while the hardy archers lounged and chatted amid the tethered horses, while they munched their scanty provisions.

'For my part,' said Sir Simon Burley, 'I am of opinion that we have already done that which we have come for. For do we not now know where the king is, and how great a following he hath, which was the end of our journey.'

'True,' answered Sir William Felton, 'but I have come on this venture because it is a long time since I have broken a spear in war, and, certes, I shall not go back until I have run a course with some cavalier of Spain. Let those go back who will, but I must see more of these Spaniards ere I turn.'

'I will not leave you, Sir William,' returned Sir Simon Burley; 'and yet, as an old soldier, and one who hath seen much of war, I cannot but think that it is an ill thing for four hundred men to find themselves between an army of sixty thousand on the one side and a broad river on the other.'

'Yet,' said Sir Richard Causton, 'we cannot for the honour of England go back without a blow struck.'

'Nor for the honour of Scotland either,' cried the Earl of Angus. 'By Saint Andrew! I wish that I may never set eyes upon the water of Leith again, if I pluck my horse's bridle ere I have seen this camp of theirs.'

'By Saint Paul! you have spoken very well,' said Sir Nigel, 'and I have always heard that there were very worthy gentlemen among the Scots, and fine skirmishing to be had upon their border. Bethink you, Sir Simon, that we have this news from the lips of common spies, who can scarce tell us as much of the enemy and of his forces as the prince would wish to hear.'

'You are the leader in this venture, Sir Nigel,' the other answered, 'and I do but ride under your banner.'

'Yet I would fain have your rede and counsel, Sir Simon. But, touching what you say of the river, we can take heed that we

shall not have it at the back of us, for the prince hath now advanced to Salvatierra, and thence to Vittoria, so that if we come upon their camp from the further side we can make good our retreat.'

'What then would you propose?' asked Sir Simon, shaking his grizzled head as one who is but half convinced.

'That we ride forward ere the news reach them that we have crossed the river. In this way we may have sight of their army, and perchance even find occasion for some small deed against them.'

'So be it, then,' said Sir Simon Burley; and the rest of the council having approved, a scanty meal was hurriedly snatched, and the advance resumed under the cover of the darkness. All night they led their horses, stumbling and groping through wild defiles and rugged valleys, following the guidance of a frightened peasant who was strapped by the wrist to Black Simon's stirrup-leather. With the early dawn they found themselves in a black ravine, with others sloping away from it on either side, and the bare brown crags rising in long bleak terraces all round them.

'If it please you, fair lord,' said Black Simon, 'this man hath misled us, and since there is no tree upon which we may hang him, it might be well to hurl him over yonder cliff.'

The peasant, reading the soldier's meaning in his fierce eyes and harsh accents, dropped upon his knees, screaming loudly for mercy.

'How comes it, dog?' asked Sir William Felton in Spanish. 'Where is this camp to which you swore that you would lead us?'

'By the sweet Virgin! By the blessed Mother of God!' cried the trembling peasant, 'I swear to you that in the darkness I have myself lost the path.'

'Over the cliff with him!' shouted half a dozen voices; but ere the archers could drag him from the rocks to which he clung Sir Nigel had ridden up and called upon them to stop.

'How is this, sirs?' said he. 'As long as the prince doth me the honour to entrust this venture to me, it is for me only to give orders; and, by Saint Paul! I shall be right blithe to go very deeply into the matter with anyone to whom my words may give offence. How say you, Sir William? Or you, my Lord of Angus? Or you, Sir Richard?'

'Nay, nay, Nigel!' cried Sir William. 'This base peasant is too small a matter for old comrades to quarrel over. But he hath betrayed us, and certes he hath merited a dog's death.'

'Hark ye, fellow,' said Sir Nigel. 'We give you one more chance to find the path. We are about to gain much honour, Sir William, in this enterprise, and it would be a sorry thing if the first blood shed were that of an unworthy boor. Let us say our morning orisons, and it may chance that ere we finish he may strike upon the track.'

With bowed heads and steel caps in hand, the archers stood at their horses' heads, while Sir Simon Burley repeated the Pater, the Ave, and the Credo. Long did Alleyne bear the scene in mind—the knot of knights in their dull leaden-hued armour, the ruddy visage of Sir Oliver, the craggy features of the Scottish earl, the shining scalp of Sir Nigel, with the dense ring of hard bearded faces and the long brown heads of the horses, all topped and circled by the beetling cliffs. Scarce had the last deep 'Amen' broken from the Company, when, in an instant, there rose the scream of a hundred bugles, with the deep rolling of drums and the clashing of cymbals, all sounding together in one deafening uproar. Knights and archers sprang to arms, convinced that some great host was upon them; but the guide dropped upon his knees and thanked heaven for its mercies.

'We have found them, caballeros!' he cried. 'This is their morning call. If ye will but deign to follow me, I will set them before you ere a man might tell his beads.'

As he spoke he scrambled down one of the narrow ravines, and, climbing over a low ridge at the further end, he led them into a short valley with a stream purling down the centre of it and a very thick growth of elder and of box upon either side. Pushing their way through the dense brushwood, they looked out upon a scene which made their hearts beat harder and their breath come faster.

In front of them there lay a broad plain, watered by two winding streams and covered with grass, stretching away to where, in the furthest distance, the towers of Burgos bristled up against the light blue morning sky. Over all this vast meadow there lay a great city of tents—thousands upon thousands of them, laid out in streets and in squares like a well-ordered town. High silken pavilions or coloured marquees, shooting up from among the crowd of meaner dwellings, marked where the great lords and barons of

Leon and Castile displayed their standards, while over the white roofs, as far as eye could reach, the waving of ancients, pavons, pensils, and banderoles, with flash of gold and glow of colours, proclaimed that all the chivalry of Iberia were mustered in the plain beneath them. Far off, in the centre of the camp, a huge palace of red and white silk, with the royal arms of Castile waving from the summit, announced that the gallant Henry lay there in the midst of his warriors.

As the English adventurers, peeping out from behind their brushwood screen, looked down upon this wondrous sight they could see that the vast army in front of them was already afoot. The first pink light of the rising sun glittered upon the steel caps and breastplates of dense masses of slingers and of crossbowmen, who drilled and marched in the spaces which had been left for their exercise. A thousand columns of smoke reeked up into the pure morning air where the faggots were piled and the camp-kettles already simmering. In the open plain clouds of light horse galloped and swooped with swaying bodies and waving javelins, after the fashion which the Spanish had adopted from their Moorish enemies. All along by the sedgy banks of the rivers long lines of pages led their masters' chargers down to water, while the knights themselves lounged in gaily dressed groups about the doors of their pavilions, or rode out, with their falcons upon their wrists and their greyhounds behind them, in quest of quail or of leveret.

'By my hilt! mon gar.,' whispered Aylward to Alleyne, as the young squire stood with parted lips and wondering eyes, gazing down at the novel scene before him, 'we have been seeking them all night, but now that we have found them I know not what we are to do with them.'

'You say sooth, Samkin,' quoth old Johnston. 'I would that we were upon the far side of Ebro again, for there is neither honour nor profit to be gained here. What say you, Simon?'

'By the rood!' cried the fierce man-at-arms, 'I will see the colour of their blood ere I turn my mare's head for the mountains. Am I a child, that I should ride for three days and nought but words at the end of it?'

'Well said, my sweet honeysuckle!' cried Hordle John. 'I am with you, like hilt to blade. Could I but lay hands upon one of those gay prancers yonder, I doubt not that I should have ransom enough from him to buy my mother a new cow.'

'A cow!' said Aylward. 'Say rather ten acres and a homestead on the banks of Avon.'

'Say you so? Then, by Our Lady! here is for yonder one in the red jerkin!'

He was about to push recklessly forward into the open, when Sir Nigel himself darted in front of him, with his hand upon his breast.

'Back!' said he. 'Our time is not yet come, and we must lie here until evening. Throw off your jacks and headpieces, lest their eyes catch the shine, and tether the horses among the rocks.'

The order was swiftly obeyed, and in ten minutes the archers were stretched along by the side of the brook, munching the bread and the bacon which they had brought in their bags, and craning their necks to watch the ever-changing scene beneath them. Very quiet and still they lay, save for a muttered jest or whispered order, for twice during the long morning they heard bugle-calls from amid the hills on either side of them, which showed that they had thrust themselves in between the outposts of the enemy. The leaders sat amongst the box-wood, and took counsel together as to what they should do; while from below there surged up the buzz of voices, the shouting, the neighing of horses, and all the uproar of a great camp.

'What boots it to wait?' said Sir William Felton. 'Let us ride down upon their camp ere they discover us.'

'And so say I,' cried the Scottish earl; 'for they do not know that there is any enemy within thirty long leagues of them.'

'For my part,' said Sir Simon Burley, 'I think that it is madness, for you cannot hope to rout this great army; and where are you to go and what are you to do when they have turned upon you? How say you, Sir Oliver Buttesthorn?'

'By the apple of Eve!' cried the fat knight, 'it appears to me that this wind brings a very savoury smell of garlic and of onions from their cooking-kettles. I am in favour of riding down upon them at once, if my old friend and comrade here is of the same mind.'

'Nay,' said Sir Nigel, 'I have a plan by which we may attempt some small deed upon them, and yet, by the help of God, may be able to draw off again; which, as Sir Simon Burley hath said, would be scarce possible in any other way.'

'How then, Sir Nigel?' asked several voices.

'We shall lie here all day; for amid this brushwood it is ill

for them to see us. Then, when evening comes, we shall sally out upon them and see if we may not gain some honourable advancement from them.'

'But why then rather than now?'

'Because we shall have nightfall to cover us when we draw off, so that we may make our way back through the mountains. I would station a score of archers here in the pass, with all our pennons jutting forth from the rocks, and as many nakirs and drums and bugles as we have with us, so that those who follow us in the fading light may think that the whole army of the prince is upon them, and fear to go further. What think you of my plan, Sir Simon?'

'By my troth! I think very well of it,' cried the prudent old commander. 'If four hundred men must needs run a tilt against sixty thousand, I cannot see how they can do it better or more safely.'

'And so say I,' cried Felton, heartily. 'But I wish the day were over, for it will be an ill thing for us if they chance to light upon us.'

The words were scarce out of his mouth when there came a clatter of loose stones, the sharp clink of trotting hoofs, and a dark-faced cavalier, mounted upon a white horse, burst through the bushes and rode swiftly down the valley from the end which was farthest from the Spanish camp. Lightly armed, with his vizor open and a hawk perched upon his left wrist, he looked about him with the careless air of a man who is bent wholly upon pleasure, and unconscious of the possibility of danger. Suddenly, however, his eyes lit upon the fierce faces which glared out at him from the brushwood. With a cry of terror, he thrust his spurs into his horse's sides and dashed for the narrow opening of the gorge. For a moment it seemed as though he would have reached it, for he had trampled over or dashed aside the archers who threw themselves in his way; but Hordle John seized him by the foot in his grasp of iron and dragged him from the saddle, while two others caught the frightened horse.

'Ho, ho!' roared the great archer. 'How many cows wilt buy my mother, if I set thee free?'

'Hush that bull's bellowing!' cried Sir Nigel impatiently. 'Bring the man here. By Saint Paul! it is not the first time that we have met; for, if I mistake not, it is Don Diego Alvarez, who was once at the prince's court.'

'It is indeed I,' said the Spanish knight, speaking in the French tongue, 'and I pray you to pass your sword through my heart; for how can I live—I, a caballero of Castile—after being dragged from my horse by the base hands of a common archer?'

'Fret not for that,' answered Sir Nigel. 'For, in sooth, had he not pulled you down, a dozen cloth-yard shafts had crossed each other in your body.'

'By Saint James! it were better so than to be polluted by his touch,' answered the Spaniard, with his black eyes sparkling with rage and hatred. 'I trust that I am now the prisoner of some honourable knight or gentleman.'

'You are the prisoner of the man who took you, Sir Diego,' answered Sir Nigel. 'And I may tell you that better men than either you or I have found themselves before now prisoners in the hands of archers of England.'

'What ransom, then, does he demand?' asked the Spaniard.

Big John scratched his red head and grinned in high delight when the question was propounded to him. 'Tell him,' said he, 'that I shall have ten cows and a bull too, if it be but a little one. Also a dress of blue sendall for mother and a red one for Joan; with five acres of pasture-land, two scythes, and a fine new grindstone. Likewise a small house, with stalls for the cows, and thirty-six gallons of beer for the thirsty weather.'

'Tut, tut!' cried Sir Nigel, laughing. 'All these things may be had for money; and I think, Don Diego, that five thousand crowns is not too much for so renowned a knight.'

'It shall be duly paid him.'

'For some days we must keep you with us; and I must crave leave also to use your shield, your armour, and your horse.'

'My harness is yours by the law of arms,' said the Spaniard, gloomily.

'I do but ask the loan of it. I have need of it this day, but it shall be duly returned to you. Set guards, Aylward, with arrow on string, at either end of the pass; for it may happen that some other cavaliers may visit us ere the time be come.' All day the little band of Englishmen lay in the sheltered gorge, looking down upon the vast host of their unconscious enemies. Shortly after mid-day, a great uproar of shouting and cheering broke out in the camp, with mustering of men and calling of bugles. Clambering up among the rocks, the companions saw a long rolling cloud of dust along the whole eastern sky-line, with the glint of spears and

the flutter of pennons, which announced the approach of a large body of cavalry. For a moment a wild hope came upon them that perhaps the prince had moved more swiftly than had been planned, that he had crossed the Ebro, and that this was his vanguard sweeping to the attack.

'Surely I see the red pile of Chandos at the head of yonder squadron!' cried Sir Richard Causton, shading his eyes with his hand.

'Not so,' answered Sir Simon Burley, who had watched the approaching host with a darkening face. 'It is even as I feared. That is the double eagle of Du Guesclin.'

'You say very truly,' cried the Earl of Angus. 'These are the levies of France, for I can see the ensigns of the Marshal d'Andreghen, with that of the Lord of Antoing and of Briseuil, and of many another from Brittany and Anjou.'

'By Saint Paul! I am very glad of it,' said Sir Nigel. 'Of these Spaniards I know nothing; but the French are very worthy gentlemen, and will do what they can for our advancement.'

'There are at the least four thousand of them, and all men-at-arms,' cried Sir William Felton. 'See, there is Bertrand himself, beside his banner, and there is King Henry, who rides to welcome him. Now they all turn and come into the camp together.'

As he spoke, the vast throng of Spaniards and of Frenchmen trooped across the plain, with brandished arms and tossing banners. All day long the sound of revelry and of rejoicing from the crowded camp swelled up to the ears of the Englishmen, and they could see the soldiers of the two nations throwing themselves into each other's arms and dancing hand-in-hand round the blazing fires. The sun had sunk behind a cloud-bank in the west before Sir Nigel at last gave word that the men should resume their arms and have their horses ready. He had himself thrown off his armour, and had dressed himself from head to foot in the harness of the captured Spaniard.

'Sir William,' said he, 'it is my intention to attempt a small deed, and I ask you therefore that you will lead this outfall upon the camp. For me, I will ride into their camp with my squire and two archers. I pray you to watch me, and to ride forth when I am come among the tents. You will leave twenty men behind here, as we planned this morning, and you will ride back here after you have ventured as far as seems good to you.'

'I will do as you order, Nigel; but what is it that you purpose to do?'

'You will see anon, and indeed it is but a trifling matter. Alleyne, you will come with me, and lead a spare horse by the bridle. I will have the two archers who rode with us through France for they are trusty men and of stout heart. Let them ride behind us, and let them leave their bows here among the bushes, for it is not my wish that they should know that we are Englishmen. Say no word to any whom we may meet, and, if any speak to you, pass on as though you heard them not. Are you ready?'

'I am ready, my fair lord,' said Alleyne.

'And I,' 'And I,' cried Aylward and John.

'Then the rest I leave to your wisdom, Sir William; and if God sends us fortune we shall meet you again in this gorge ere it be dark.'

So saying, Sir Nigel mounted the white horse of the Spanish cavalier, and rode quietly forth from his concealment with his three companions behind him, Alleyne leading his master's own steed by the bridle. So many small parties of French and Spanish horse were sweeping hither and thither that the small band attracted little notice, and making its way at a gentle trot across the plain, they came as far as the camp without challenge or hindrance. On and on they pushed past the endless lines of tents, amid the dense swarms of horsemen and of footmen, until the huge royal pavilion stretched in front of them. They were close upon it when of a sudden there broke out a wild hubbub from a distant portion of the camp, with screams and war-cries and all the wild tumult of battle. At the sound soldiers came rushing from their tents, knights shouted loudly for their squires, and there was mad turmoil on every hand of bewildered men and plunging horses. At the royal tent a crowd of gorgeously dressed servants ran hither and thither in helpless panic, for the guard of soldiers who were stationed there had already ridden off in the direction of the alarm. A man-at-arms on either side of the doorway were the sole protectors of the royal dwelling.

'I have come for the king,' whispered Sir Nigel; 'and, by Saint Paul! he must back with us or I must bide here.'

Alleyne and Aylward sprang from their horses, and flew at the two sentries, who were disarmed and beaten down in an instant by so furious and unexpected an attack. Sir Nigel dashed into the royal tent, and was followed by Hordle John as soon as the horses

had been secured. From within came wild screamings and the clash of steel, and then the two emerged once more, their swords and forearms reddened with blood, while John bore over his shoulder the senseless body of a man whose gay surcoat, adorned with the lions and towers of Castile, proclaimed him to belong to the royal house. A crowd of white-faced sewers and pages swarmed at their heels, those behind pushing forwards, while the foremost shrank back from the fierce faces and reeking weapons of the adventurers. The senseless body was thrown across the spare horse, the four sprang to their saddles, and away they thundered with loose reins and busy spurs through the swarming camp.

But confusion and disorder still reigned among the Spaniards, for Sir William Felton and his men had swept through half their camp, leaving a long litter of the dead and the dying to mark their course. Uncertain who were their attackers, and unable to tell their English enemies from their newly arrived Breton allies, the Spanish knights rode wildly hither and thither in aimless fury. The mad turmoil, the mixture of races, and the fading light, were all in favour of the four who alone knew their own purpose among the vast uncertain multitude. Twice ere they reached open ground they had to break their way through small bodies of horses, and once there came a whistle of arrows and singing of stones about their ears; but, still dashing onwards, they shot out from among the tents and found their own comrades retreating for the mountains at no very great distance from them. Another five minutes of wild galloping over the plain, and they were all back in their gorge, while their pursuers fell back before the rolling of drums and blare of trumpets, which seemed to proclaim that the whole army of the prince was about to emerge from the mountain passes.

'By my soul! Nigel,' cried Sir Oliver, waving a great boiled ham over his head, 'I have come by something which I may eat with my truffles! I had a hard fight for it, for there were three of them with their mouths open and the knives in their hands, all sitting agape round the table, when I rushed in upon them. How say you, Sir William, will you not try the smack of the famed Spanish swine, though we have but the brook water to wash it down?'

'Later, Sir Oliver,' answered the old soldier, wiping his grimed face. 'We must further into the mountains ere we be in safety. But what have we here, Nigel?'

'It is a prisoner whom I have taken, and in sooth, as he came from the royal tent and wears the royal arms upon his jupon, I trust that he is the King of Spain.'

'The King of Spain!' cried the companions, crowding round in amazement.

'Nay, Sir Nigel,' said Felton, peering at the prisoner through the uncertain light. 'I have twice seen Henry of Transtamare, and certes this man in no way resembles him.'

'Then, by the light of heaven! I will ride back for him,' cried Sir Nigel.

'Nay, nay, the camp is in arms, and it would be rank madness. Who are you, fellow?' he added in Spanish, 'and how is it that you dare to wear the arms of Castile?'

The prisoner was but recovering the consciousness which had been squeezed from him by the grip of Hordle John. 'If it please you,' he answered, 'I and nine others are the body-squires of the king, and must ever wear his arms, so as to shield him from even such perils as have threatened him this night. The king is at the tent of the brave Du Guesclin, where he will sup to-night. But I am a caballero of Aragon, Don Sancho Penelosa, and, though I be no king, I am yet ready to pay a fitting price for my ransom.'

'By Saint Paul! I will not touch your gold,' cried Sir Nigel. 'Go back to your master and give him greeting from Sir Nigel Loring of Twynham Castle, telling him that I had hoped to make his better acquaintance this night, and that, if I have disordered his tent, it was but in my eagerness to know so famed and courteous a knight. Spur on, comrades! for we must cover many a league ere we can venture to light fire or to loosen girth. I had hoped to ride without this patch to-night, but it seems that I must carry it yet a little longer.'

(To be continued.)

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THE NEW RECTOR.

BY THE AUTHOR OF 'THE HOUSE OF THE WOLF.'

CHAPTER XXII.

THE RECTOR'S DECISION.

THE church clock was striking nine as the rector, jogging along behind the little pony, came in sight of the turnpike-house outside the town. He had no overcoat, and the drive had chilled him; and, anxious at once to warm himself and to reach the rectory as quietly as possible, he bade the driver stop at the gate and set him down. The lad had been strictly charged to see the parson home, and would have demurred, but Lindo persisted good-humouredly, and had his way. In two minutes he was striding briskly along the road, his shoulders squared, and the night's reflections still running like a rich purple thread through the common stuff of his everyday thoughts.

In this mood, which the pure morning air and crisp sunshine tended to favour and prolong, he came at a corner plump upon Mr. Bonamy, who, like all angular uncomfortable men, was an early riser, and had this morning chosen to extend his before-breakfast walk in the direction of Baerton. The lawyer's energy had already been rewarded. He had met Mr. Keogh, and learned not only the earlier details of the accident—which were, indeed, known to all Claversham, for the town had sat up into the small hours listening for wheels and discussing the catastrophe—but had further received a minute description of the rector's conduct. Consequently his thoughts were already busy

with the clergyman when, turning a corner, he came unexpectedly upon him.

Lindo met his glance and looked away hastily. The rector had been anxious to avoid, by going home at once, any appearance of parading what he had done, and he would have passed on with a brief good-morning. But the lawyer seemed to be differently disposed. He stopped short in the middle of the path, so that the clergyman could not pass him without rudeness, and nodded a jerky greeting. 'You have not walked all the way, I suppose, Mr. Lindo?' he said, his keen small eyes reading the other's face like a book.

'No,' the rector answered, colouring uncomfortably under his gaze. 'I drove as far as the turnpike, Mr. Bonamy.'

'Well, you may think yourself lucky to be well out of it,' the lawyer rejoined, with a dry smile. 'To be here at all, indeed,' he continued, with a gesture of the hand which seemed meant to indicate the sunshine and the upper air. 'When a man does a foolhardy thing he does not always escape, you know.'

The younger man reddened. But this morning he had his temper well under control; and he merely answered, 'I thought I was called upon to do what I did, Mr. Bonamy. But of course that is a matter of opinion. Perhaps I was wrong, perhaps right. I did what I thought best at the moment, and I am satisfied.'

Mr. Bonamy shrugged his shoulders. 'Oh, well, every man to his notion,' he said. 'I do not approve, myself, of people running risks which do not lie within the scope of their business. And as nothing has happened to you——'

'The risk of anything happening,' the rector rejoined, with warmth, 'was so small that the thing is not worth discussing, Mr. Bonamy. There is a matter, however,' he continued, changing the subject on a sudden impulse, 'which I think I may as well mention to you now as later. You, as churchwarden, have, in fact, a right to be informed of it. I——'

'You are cold,' said Mr. Bonamy abruptly. 'Allow me to turn with you.'

The rector bowed and complied. The request, however, had checked the current of his speech, even the current of his thoughts, and he did not finish his sentence. He felt, indeed, for a moment a temptation as sudden as it was strong. He saw at a glance what his resolve meant. He discerned that what had appeared to him in the isolation of the night an act of dignified self-surrender

must, and would, seem to others an acknowledgment of defeat—almost an acknowledgment of dishonour. He recalled, as in a flash, all the episodes of the struggle between himself and his companion. And he pictured the latter's triumph. He wavered.

But the events of the last eighteen hours had not been lost upon him, and, after a brief hesitation, he set the seal on his purpose. 'You are aware, I know, Mr. Bonamy,' he said, with an effort, 'of the circumstances under which, in Lord Dynmore's absence, I accepted the living here.'

'Perfectly,' said the lawyer drily.

'He has made those circumstances the subject of a grave charge against me,' the rector continued, a touch of hauteur in his tone. 'That you have heard also, I know. Well, I desire to say once more that I repudiate that charge in the fullest and widest sense.'

'So I understand,' Mr. Bonamy murmured. He walked along by his companion's side, his face set and inscrutable. If he felt any surprise at the communication now being made to him he had the skill to hide it.

'I repudiate it, you understand!' the clergyman repeated, stepping out more quickly in his excitement, and glaring angrily into vacancy. 'It is a false and wicked charge! But it does not affect me. I do not care a jot for it. It does not in any sense force me to do what I am going to do. If that were all, I should not dream of resigning the living, but, on the contrary, would hold it, as a few days ago I had determined to hold it, in the face of all opposition. However,' he continued, lowering his tone, 'I have now examined my position in regard to the parish rather than the patron, and I have come to a different conclusion, Mr. Bonamy—namely, to place my resignation in the proper hands as speedily as possible.'

Mr. Bonamy nodded gently and silently. He did not speak, he did not even look at the clergyman; and this placid acquiescence irritated the young man into adding a word he had not intended to say. 'I tell you this as my churchwarden, Mr. Bonamy,' he continued stiffly, 'and not as desiring or expecting any word of sympathy or regret from you. On the contrary,' he added, with some bitterness, 'I am aware that my departure can be only a relief to you. We have been opposed to one another since my first day here.'

'Very true,' said Mr. Bonamy, nodding placidly. 'I suppose you have considered——'

'What?'

'The effect which last night's work may have on the relations between you and Lord Dynmore?'

'I do not understand you,' the rector answered haughtily, and yet with some wonder. What did the man mean?

'You know, I suppose,' Mr. Bonamy retorted, turning slightly so as to command a view of his companion's face, 'that he is the owner of the Big Pit at Baerton from which you have just come?'

'Lord Dynmore is?'

'To be sure.'

A flush of crimson swept over the rector's brow and left him red and frowning. 'I did not know that!' he said, his teeth set together.

'So I perceive,' the lawyer replied, with a nod, as they turned into the churchyard. 'But I can reassure you. It is not at all likely to affect the earl's plans. He is an obstinate man, though in some points a good-natured one, and he will most certainly accept your resignation if you send it in. But here you are at home.' He paused, standing awkwardly by the clergyman's side. At last he added, 'It is a comfortable house. I do not think that there is a more comfortable house in Claversham.'

He retired a few steps into the churchyard as he spoke, and stood looking up at the massive old-fashioned front of the rectory, as if he had never seen the house before. The clergyman, anxious to be indoors and alone, shot an impatient glance at him, and waited for him to go. But he did not go, and presently something in his intent gaze drew Lindo, too, into the churchyard, and the two ill-assorted companions looked up together at the old grey house. The early sun shone aslant on it, burnishing the half-open windows. In the porch a robin was hopping to and fro. 'It is a comfortable, roomy house,' the lawyer repeated.

'It is,' the rector answered—slowly, as if the words were wrung from him. And he, too, stood looking up at it as if he were fascinated.

'A man might grow old in it,' murmured Mr. Bonamy. There was a slight, but very unusual, flush on his parchment-coloured face, and his eyes, when he turned with an abrupt movement to his companion, did not rise above the latter's waistcoat. 'Comfortably too, I should say,' he added querulously, rattling the money in his pockets. 'I think if I were you I would reconsider my determination. I think I would, do you know? As it is, what

you have told me will not go any farther. You did one foolish thing last night. I would not do another to-day, if I were you, Mr. Lindo.'

With that he turned abruptly away—his head down, his coat-tails swinging, and both his hands thrust deep into his trouser-pockets—such a shrewd, angular, ungainly figure as only a small country town can show. He left the rector standing before his rectory in a state of profound surprise and bewilderment. The young man felt something very like a lump in his throat as he turned to go in. He discerned that the lawyer had meant to do a kind, nay, a generous action; and yet if there was a man in the world whom he had judged incapable of such magnanimity it was Mr. Bonamy! He went in not only touched, but ashamed. Here, if he had not already persuaded himself that the world was less ill-conditioned than he had lately thought it, was another and a surprising lesson!

Meanwhile Mr. Bonamy went home in haste, and finding his family already at breakfast, sat down to the meal in a very snappish humour. The girls were quick to detect the cloud on his brow, and promptly supplied his wants, forbearing, whatever their curiosity, to make any present attempt to satisfy it. Jack was either less observant or more hardy. He remarked that Mr. Bonamy was late, and elicited only a grunt. A further statement that the morning was more like April than February gained no answer at all. Still undismayed, Jack tried again, plunging into the subject which the three had been discussing before the lawyer entered. 'Did you hear anything of Lindo, sir?' he asked, buttering his toast.

'I saw him,' the lawyer said curtly.

'Was he all right?' Jack ventured.

'More right than he deserved to be!' Mr. Bonamy snarled. 'What right had he down the pit at all? Gregg did not go.'

'More shame to Gregg, I think!' Jack said.

Mr. Bonamy prudently shifted his ground, and got back to the rector. 'Well, all I can say is that a more foolish, reckless, useless piece of idiocy I never heard of in my life!' he declared in a tone of scorn.

'I call it glorious!' said Daintry, looking dreamily across the table and slowly withdrawing an egg-spoon from her mouth. 'I shall never say anything against him again.'

Mr. Bonamy looked at her for an instant as if he would annihilate her. And then he went on with his breakfast.

Apparently, however, the outburst had relieved him, for pre-

sently he began on his own account. 'Has your friend any private means?' he asked, casting an ungracious glance at the barrister, and returning at once to his buttered toast.

'Who? Lindo, do you mean?' Jack replied in surprise.

'Yes.'

'Something, I should say. Perhaps a hundred a year. Why?'

'Because, if that is all he has,' the lawyer growled, buttering a fresh piece of toast and frowning at it savagely, 'I think that you had better see him and prevent him making a fool of himself. That is all.'

His tone meant more than his words expressed. Kate's eyes sought Jack's in alarm, only to be instantly averted. Though she had the urn before her, she turned red and white, and had to bury her face in her cup to hide her discomposure. Yet she need not have feared. Mr. Bonamy was otherwise engaged, and as for Jack, her embarrassment told him nothing of which he was not already aware. He knew that his service was and must be a thankless and barren service—that to him fell the empty part of the slave in the triumph. Had he not within the last few hours—when the news that the rector had descended the Big Pit to tend the wounded and comfort the dying first reached the town, and a dozen voices were loud in his praise—had he not seen Kate's face now bright with triumph and now melting with tender anxiety? Had he not felt a bitter pang of jealousy as he listened to his friend's praises? and had he not crushed down the feeling manfully, bravely, heroically, and spoken as loudly, ay, and as cordially after an instant's effort, as the most fervent?

Yes, he had done all this and suffered all this, being one of those who believe that

> Loyalty is still the same,
> Whether it win or lose the game:
> True as the dial to the sun,
> Although it be not shone upon.

And he was not going to flinch now. He put no more questions to Mr. Bonamy, but, when breakfast was finished, he got up and went out. It needed not the covert glance which he shot at Kate as he disappeared, to assure her that he was going about her unspoken errand.

Five minutes saw him face to face with the rector on the latter's hearthrug. Or, rather, to be accurate, five minutes saw him staring irate and astonished at his host while Lindo, with

one foot on the fender and his eyes on the fire, seemed very willing to avoid his gaze. 'You have made up your mind to resign!' Jack exclaimed, in accents almost awe-stricken. 'You are joking!'

But the rector, still looking down, shook his head. 'No, Jack, I am not,' he said slowly. 'I am in earnest.'

'Then may I ask when you came to this extraordinary resolution?' the barrister retorted hotly. 'And why?'

'Last night; and because—well, because I thought it right,' was the answer.

'You thought it right?'

Jack's tone was a fine mixture of wonder, contempt, and offence. It made Lindo wince, but it did not shake his resolution. 'Yes,' he said firmly. 'That is so.'

'And that is all you are going to tell me, is it? You put yourself in my hands a few days ago. You took my advice and acted upon it, and now, without a word of explanation, you throw me over! Good heavens! I have no patience with you!' In his indignation Jack began to walk up and down the room. 'Is not the position the same to-day as yesterday? Tell me that.'

'Well,' the rector began, turning and speaking slowly, 'the truth is——'

'No!' cried the barrister, interrupting him ruthlessly. 'Tell me this first. Is not the position the same to-day as yesterday?'

'It is, but the view I take of it is different,' the young clergyman answered earnestly. 'Let me explain, Smith. When I agreed with you a few days ago that the proper course for me to follow, the course which would most fitly assert my honesty and good faith, was to retain the living in spite of threats and opposition, I had my own interests and my own dignity chiefly in view. I looked upon the question as one solely between Lord Dynmore and myself; and I felt, rightly as I still think, that, as a man falsely accused by another man, I had a right to repel the charge by the only practical means in my power—by maintaining my position and defying him to do his worst.'

He paused.

'Well,' said Jack drily.

But the rector did not continue at once, and when he did speak it was with evident effort. He first went back to the fire, and stood gazing into it in the old attitude, with his head slightly bowed and his foot on the fender. The posture was one of humility, and so

far unlike the man, that it struck Jack and touched him strangely. At last Lindo did continue. 'Well, you see,' he said slowly, 'that was all right as far as it went. My mistake lay in taking too narrow a view. I thought only of myself and Lord Dynmore, when I should have been thinking of the parish and of—a word I know you are not very fond of—the church. I should have remembered that with this accusation hanging over me I could not hope to do much good among my people; and that to many of them I should seem an interloper, a man clinging obstinately to something not his own nor fairly acquired. In a word, I ought to have remembered that for the future I should be useless for good and might, on the other hand, become a stumbling-block and occasion for scandal—both inside the parish and outside. You see what I mean, I am sure.'

'I see,' quoth Jack contemptuously, 'that you need a great many words to make out your case. What I do not think you have considered is the inference which will be drawn from your resignation—you will be taken to have confessed yourself in the wrong.'

'I cannot help that.'

'Will not that be a scandal?'

'It will, at any rate, be one soon forgotten.'

'Now, I tell you what!' Jack exclaimed, standing still and confronting the other with the air of a man bent on speaking his mind though the heavens should fall. 'This is just a piece of absurd Quixotism, Lindo. You are a poor man, without means and without influence; and you are going, for the sake of a foolish idea—a mere speculative scruple—to give up an income and a house and a useful sphere of work such as you will never get again! You are going to do that, and go back—to what? To a miserable curacy—don't wince, my friend, for that is what you are going to do—and an income one-fifth of that which you have been spending for the last six months! Now the sole question is, are you quite an idiot?'

'You are pretty plain-spoken,' said the rector, smiling feebly.

'I mean to be!' was Jack's uncompromising retort. 'I have asked you, and I want an answer—are you a fool?'

'I hope not.'

'Then you will give up this fool's notion?' Jack replied viciously.

But the rector's only answer was a shake of the head. He did not look round. Had he done so, he would have seen that, though Jack's keen face was flushed with anger and annoyance, his eyes were moist and wore an expression very much at variance with his tone.

He missed that, however; and Jack made one more attempt.

'Look here,' he said bluntly: 'have you considered that if you stop you will find your path a good deal smoothed by last night's work?'

'No, I have not,' the rector answered stubbornly.

'Well, you will find it so, you may be sure of that! Why, man alive!' Jack continued with vehemence, 'you are going to be the hero of the place for the time. No one will believe anything against you, except perhaps Gregg and a few beasts of his kind. Whereas, if you go now, do you know who will get your berth?'

'No.'

Jack rapped out the name. 'Clode! Clode, and no one else, I will be bound!' he said. 'And you do not love him.'

The rector had not expected the reply. He started, and, removing his foot from the fender, turned sharply so as to face his friend. 'No,' he said slowly and reluctantly, 'I do not think I do like him. I consider that he has behaved badly, Jack. He has not stood by me as he should have done, or as I would have stood by him had our positions been reversed. I do not think he has called here once since the bazaar, except on business, and then I was out. I had planned, indeed, to see him to-day and ask him what it meant, and, if I found he had come to an adverse opinion in my matter, to give him notice. But now——'

'You will make him a present of the living instead,' Jack said grimly.

'I do not know why he should get it,' the rector answered, with a frown, 'more than any one else.'

'It is the common report that he will,' Jack retorted. 'As for that, however——'

But why follow him through all the resources of his art? He put forth every effort—perhaps against his own better judgment, for a man will do for his friend what he will not do for himself—to persuade the rector to recall his decision. And he failed. He succeeded, indeed, in wringing the young clergyman's heart and making him wince at the thought of his barren future and his curate's triumph; but there his success ended. He made no progress towards inducing him to change his mind; and presently he found that all the arguments he advanced were met by a set formula, to which the rector seemed to cling as in self-defence.

'It is no good, Jack,' he answered—and if he said it once, he said it half a dozen times—'it is no good! I cannot take any one's

advice on this subject. The responsibility is mine, and I cannot shift it! I must try to do right according to my own conscience!'

Jack did not know that the words were Kate's, and that every time the rector repeated them he had Kate in his mind. But he saw that they were unanswerable; and when he had listened to them for the sixth time he took up his hat in a huff. 'Well, have your own way!' he said, turning away. 'After all, you are right. It is your business and not mine. Give Clode the living if you like!'

And he went out sharply.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE CURATE HEARS THE NEWS.

SELDOM, if ever, had the curate passed a week so harassing as that which was ushered in by the bazaar, and was destined to end—though he did not know this—in the colliery accident. During these seven days he managed to run through a perfect gamut of feelings. He rose each day in a different mood. One day he was hopeful, confident, assured of success; the next fearful, despondent, inclined to give up all for lost. One day he went about telling himself that the rector would not resign; that he would not himself resign in his place; that people were mad to say he would; that men do not resign livings so easily; that the very circumstances of the case must compel the rector to stand his ground. The next he saw everything in a different light. He appreciated the impossibility of a man attacked on so many sides maintaining his position for any length of time; and counted the rector's cause as lost already. One hour he bitterly regretted that he had cut himself off from his chief; the next he congratulated himself as sincerely on being untrammelled by any but a formal bond. Why, people might even have expected him, had he strongly supported the rector, to refuse the living!

He saw Laura several times during the week, but he did not open to her the extent of his hopes and fears. He shrank from doing so out of a natural prudent reticence; which after all meant only the refraining from putting into words things perfectly understood by both. To some extent he kept up between them the thin veil of appearances, which many who go through life in closest companionship preserve to the end, though each has long ago found it transparent. But though he said nothing, confining the tumult

of his feelings to his own breast, he was not blind, and he soon perceived that Laura shared his suspense, and was watching the rector's fortunes with an interest as selfish and an eye as cold as his own. Which, far from displeasing him, rather increased his ardour.

As the days passed by, however, bringing only the sickness of hope deferred and tidings of the rector's sturdy determination to hold what he had got, the curate began, not in a mere passing mood, but, on grounds of reason and calculation, to lose hope. Every tongue in the town was wagging about Lindo. My lord was, or was supposed to be, setting the engines of the law in motion. Mr. Bonamy was believed, probably with less reason, to be contemplating an appeal to the bishop and the Court of Arches. In a word, all the misfortunes which Clode had foreseen were accumulating about the devoted head; and yet—and yet it was a question whether the owner of the head was a penny the worse! Perhaps some day he might be. The earl was a great man, with a long purse, and he might yet have his way. But this was not likely to happen, as the curate now began to see, until long after the Rev. Stephen Clode's connection with the parish and claim upon the living should have become things of the past.

On the top of this conviction, which sufficiently depressed him, came the news of the colliery accident—news which did not reach him until late at night. It plunged him into the depths of despair. He cursed the ill-luck which had withheld from him the opportunity of distinguishing himself, and had granted it to the rector. He saw how fatally the affair would strengthen the latter's hands. And in effect he gave up. He resigned himself to despair. He had not the spirit to go out, but sat until long after noon, brooding miserably over the fire, his table littered with unremoved breakfast things, and his mind in a similar state of slovenly disorder. That was a day, a miserable day, he long remembered.

About half-past two he made an effort to pull himself together. Mechanically putting a book in his pocket, he took his hat and went out, with the intention of paying two or three visits in his district. He had pride enough left to excite him to the effort, and sufficient sense to recognise its supreme importance. But, even so, before he reached the street he was dreaming again —the old dreary dreams. He started when a voice behind him said brusquely, 'Going your rounds, I see! Well, there is nothing like sticking to business, whatever is on foot. Shall I have to congratulate you this time?'

He knew the voice and turned round, a scowl on his dark face. The speaker was Gregg—Gregg wearing an air of unusual jauntiness and gaiety. It fell from him, however, as he met the curate's eyes, leaving him, metaphorically speaking, naked and ashamed. The doctor stood in wholesome dread of the curate's sharp tongue and biting irony, nor would he have accosted him in so free-and-easy a manner now, had he not been a little lifted above himself by something he had just learned.

'Congratulate me? What do you mean?' Clode replied, turning on him with the uncompromising directness which is more 'upsetting' to a man uncertain of himself than any retort, however discourteous.

'What do I mean?' the doctor answered, striving to cover his discomfiture with a feeble smile. 'Well, no harm, at any rate, Clode. I hope I shall have to congratulate you. But if you are going to——'

'On what?' interrupted the curate sternly. 'On what are you going to congratulate me?'

'Haven't you heard the news?' Gregg said in surprise.

'What news? Of the pit accident?' Clode answered, restraining with difficulty a terrible outburst of passion. 'Why I should think there is not a fool within three counties has not heard it by this time!'

He almost swore at the man, and was turning away, when something in the doctor's 'No, no!' struck him, excited as he was, as peculiar. 'Then what is it?' he said, hanging on his heel, half curious and half in scorn.

'You have not heard about the rector?'

The curate glared. 'About the rector?' he said in a mechanical way. A sudden stillness fell on his face and tone at mention of the name. 'No, what of him?' he continued, after another pause.

'You have not heard that he is resigning?' Gregg asked.

The curate's eyes flashed with returning anger. 'No,' he said grimly. 'Nor anyone else out of Bedlam!'

'But it is so! It is true, I tell you!' the doctor answered in the excitement of conviction. 'I have just seen a man who had it from the archdeacon, who left the rectory not an hour ago. He is going to resign at once.'

The curate did not again deny the truth of the story. But he seemed to Gregg, watching eagerly for some sign of appreciation,

to take the news coolly, considering how important it was to him. He stood silent a moment, looking thoughtfully down the street, and then shrugged his shoulders. That was all. Gregg did not see the little pulse which began to beat so furiously and suddenly in his cheek, nor hear the buzzing which for a few seconds rendered him deaf to the shrill cries of the schoolboys playing among the pillars of the market hall.

'Mr. Lindo has changed his mind since yesterday, then,' Clode said at last, speaking in his ordinary rather contemptuous tone.

'Yes, I heard he was talking big then,' replied the doctor, delighted with his success. 'Defying the earl, and all the rest of it. That was quite in his line. But I never heard that much came of his talking. However, you are bound to stick up for him, I suppose!'

The curate frowned a little at that—why, the doctor did not understand—and then the two parted. Gregg went on his way to carry the news to others, and Clode, after standing a moment in thought, turned his steps towards the Town House. The sky had grown cloudy, the day cold and raw. The leafless avenue and silent shrubberies through which he strode presented but a wintry prospect to the common eye, but for him the air was full of sunshine and green leaves and the songs of birds. From despair to hope, from a prison to a palace, he had leapt at a single bound. In the first intoxication of confidence he could even spare a moment to regret that his hands were not *quite* clean. He felt a passing remorse for the doing of one or two things, as needless, it now turned out, as they had been questionable. Nay, he could afford to shudder, with a luxurious sense of danger safely passed, at the risks he had been so foolish as to run; thanking Providence that his folly had not landed him, as he now saw that it easily might have landed him, in such trouble as would have effectually tripped up his rising fortunes.

He reached the Town House in a perfect glow of moral worth and self-gratulation; and he was already half-way across the drawing-room before he perceived that it contained, besides Mrs. Hammond and her daughter, a third person. The third person was the rector. Except in church the two men had not met since the day of the bazaar, and both were unpleasantly surprised. Lindo rose slowly from a seat in one of the windows, and, without stepping forward, stood silently looking at his curate, as one requiring an explanation, not offering a greeting; while Clode felt

something of a shock, for he discerned at once that the situation would admit of no half measures. In the presence of Mrs. Hammond, to whom he had expressed his view of the rector's conduct, he could not adopt the cautious apologetic tone which he would probably have used had he met Lindo alone. He was fairly caught. But he was not a coward, and before the tell-tale flush had well mounted to his brow he had determined on his *rôle*. Half-way across the room he stopped, and looked at Mrs. Hammond. 'I thought you were alone,' he said with an air of constraint, partly real, partly assumed.

'There is only the rector here,' she answered bluntly. And then she added, with a little spice of malice, for Mr. Clode had not been a favourite with her since his defection, 'I suppose you are not afraid to meet him?'

'Certainly not,' the curate answered, thus challenged. And he turned haughtily to meet the rector's angry gaze. 'I am not aware that I have any need to be. I am glad to see that you are none the worse for your gallant conduct last night,' he added with perfect aplomb.

'Thank you,' Lindo answered, choking down his indignation with an effort. For a week—for a whole week—this, his chosen lieutenant, had not been near him in his trouble! 'I am much obliged to you,' he continued, 'but I am rather surprised that your anxiety on my account did not lead you to come and see me at the rectory.'

'I called, and failed to find you,' Clode answered, sitting resolutely down.

Lindo followed his example. 'I believe you did once,' he replied contemptuously. Had a friend been about to succeed him, he could have borne even to congratulate him. But the thought of this man entering on the enjoyment of all the good things he was resigning was well-nigh unendurable. Though he knew that it would best consort with his dignity to be silent, he could not refrain from pursuing the subject. 'You thought,' he went on, the same gibe in his tone, 'that a non-committal policy was best, I suppose?'

The curate for a moment sat silent, his dark face glowing with resentment. 'If you mean,' he said at last, neither Mrs. Hammond nor her daughter venturing to interfere—the former because she thought he was only getting his deserts, and the latter because she felt no call to champion him at present—'if you mean

that I did not wish to publish my opinion, you are right, Mr. Lindo.'

'I think you published it sufficiently for your purpose!' the young rector retorted with bitterness.

'Then why throw my non-committal policy in my teeth?' replied the curate deftly. Thereby winning at least a logical victory.

Lindo sneered and grew, of course, twice as angry as before. 'Very neatly put!' he said. 'I do not doubt that you would have got out of your confession of faith—or lack of faith—as cleverly, if circumstances had required it.'

The words were scarcely out of his mouth before Miss Hammond rose in a marked way and left the room; while Clode for a moment glared at him as though he would resent the insult—for it was little less—in a practical manner. Fortunately the curate's calculating brain told him that nothing could be gained by this, and with an admirable show of patience and forbearance he waved the words aside. 'I really do not understand you,' he said with a maddening air of superiority. 'I cannot be blamed for having formed an opinion of my own on a subject which affected me. Then, having formed it, what was I to do? Publish it, or keep it to myself? As a fact, I did not publish it.'

'Except by your acts,' said the rector.

'Take it that way, then,' the curate replied, still with patience. 'Do I gather that you would have had me, though I held an opinion adverse to you, come to you as before, be about you, treat you in all respects as if I were on your side? Is that your complaint? That I did not play the hypocrite?'

The rector felt that he was fairly defeated and out-manœuvred; so much so that Mrs. Hammond, whose sympathies were entirely on his side, expected him to break into a furious passion. But the very skill and coolness of his adversary acted as a warning and an example, and by a mighty effort he controlled himself. He rose from his chair with outward calmness, and, saying contemptuously, 'Well, I am glad that I know what your opinion is—an open foe is less dangerous than a secret one,' he turned from Clode. Holding out his hand to his hostess, he muttered some form of leave-taking, and walked out of the room with as much dignity as he could muster. He had certainly had the worst of the encounter.

And he felt very bitter about it, as he crossed the top of the

town. Whether the curate knew of his intention of resigning or not, his conduct in turning upon him and openly expressing his disbelief in his honesty was alike cruel and brutal. The man was false. The rector felt sure of it. But the pain which he experienced on this account—the pain of a generous man misunderstood and ill-requited—soon gave way to self-reproach. He had brought the thing on himself by his indiscreet passion. He had acted like a boy! He was not fit to be in a responsible position!

While he was still full of this, chewing the cud of his imprudence, he saw a slender figure, which he recognised, crossing the street a little way before him. He knew it at the first glance. In a moment he recognised the graceful lines, the half-proud, half-gentle carriage of the head, the glint of the cold February sun in the fair hair. It was Kate Bonamy; and the rector, as he increased his pace, became conscious, with something like a shock, of the pleasure it gave him to see her, though he had parted from her not twenty-four hours before. In a moment he was at her side, and she, turning suddenly, saw him with a start of glad surprise. 'Mr. Lindo!' she stammered, holding out her hand before he offered his, and uttering the first words which rose to her lips, 'I am so glad!'

She was thinking of the pit accident, of the risk and his safety, and perhaps a little of his good name. And he understood. But he affected not to do so. 'Are you indeed, Miss Bonamy?' he answered. 'Glad that I am going?'

His eyes met hers, and then both his and hers fell. 'No,' she said gently and slowly. 'But I am very glad, Mr. Lindo, that you have done what seemed right to you without considering your own advantage.'

'I have done a great deal since I saw you yesterday,' he answered, taking refuge in a jest.

'You have, indeed.'

'Including taking your advice.'

'I am quite sure you had made up your mind before you asked my opinion,' she answered earnestly.

'No,' he said, 'I am sure I had not. It was your hint which led me to think the position out from the beginning. When I did so it struck me that, irritated by Lord Dynmore's words and manner, I had considered the question only as it affected him and myself. Going on to think of the parish, I came to the conclusion that I was quite unfit for the position.'

Kate started. The end of his sentence was a surprise to her. They were walking along side by side now—very slowly—and she looked at him, mute interrogation in her eyes.

'I am too young,' he said. 'Your father, you know, was of that opinion from the first.'

'Oh, but'—she answered hurriedly, 'I——'

'You do not think so?' he said with a droll glance. 'Well, I am glad of that. What? You were not going to say that, Miss Bonamy?'

'No,' she answered, blushing. 'I was going to say that my father's opinion might not now be the same, Mr. Lindo.'

'I expect it is. However, the opinion on which I acted was my own. I have a very hasty temper, do you know. This very afternoon I have been quarrelling, and have put my foot into it! I confess I thought when I came here that I could manage. Now I see I am not fit for it—for the living, I mean.'

'Perhaps,' she answered slowly and in a low voice, 'you are the more fit because you feel unfit.'

'Well, I do not think I dare act on that,' he cried gaily. 'So you now see before you, Miss Bonamy, a very humble personage—a kind of clerical man-of-all-work out of place! You do not know an incumbent of easy temper who wants a curate, do you?'

He spoke lightly, without any air of seeking or posing for admiration. Yet there was a little inflection of bitterness in his voice which did not escape her ear, and perhaps spoke to it—and to her heart—more loudly, because it was not intended for either. She suddenly looked at him, and her face quivered, and then she looked away. But he had seen and understood. He marked the colour rising to the roots of her hair, and was as sure as if he had seen them that her eyes were wet with tears.

And then he knew. He felt a sudden answering yearning towards her, a forgetfulness of all her surroundings, and of all his surroundings save herself alone. What a fool, what an ingrate, what a senseless clod he had been, not to have seen months before—when it was in his power to win her, when he might have asked for something besides her pity, when he had something to offer her—that she was the fairest, purest, noblest of women! Now, when it was too late, and he had sacrificed all to a stupid conventionality, a social prejudice—what was her father to her save the natural crabbed foil of her grace and beauty—now he felt that he

would give all, only he had nothing to give, to see her wide grey eyes grow dark with tenderness, and—and love.

Yes, love. That was it. He knew now. 'Miss Bonamy,' he said hurriedly. 'Will you——'

Kate started. 'Here is my cousin,' she said quietly, and yet with suspicious abruptness. 'I think he is looking for me, Mr. Lindo.'

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE CUP AT THE LIP.

THE ten days which followed the events just described were long remembered in Claversham with fondness and regret. The accident at Baerton, and the strange position of affairs at the rectory, falling out together, created intense excitement in the town. The gossips had for once as much to talk about as the idlest could wish, and found, indeed, so much to say on the one side and the other, that the grocer, it was rumoured, ordered in a fresh supply of tea, and the two bakers worked double tides at making crumpets and Sally Lunns, and still lagged behind the demand. Old Peggy from the almshouse hung about the churchyard half the day, noting who called at the rector's; and took as much interest in her task as if her weekly dole had depended on Mr. Lindo's fortunes. While everyone who could lay the least claim to knowing more than his neighbours became for the time the object of as many attentions as a London belle.

The archdeacon drove in and out daily. Once the rumour got abroad that he had gone to see Lord Dynmore; and more than once it was said that he was away at the palace conferring with the bishop. Those most concerned walked the streets with the faces of sphinxes. The curate and the rector were known to be on the most distant terms; and to put an edge on curiosity, already keen, Mrs. Hammond was twice seen talking to Mr. Bonamy in the street.

Even the poor colliers' funeral, though a great number of the townsmen trooped out to the bleak little churchyard on Baer Hill to witness it—and to be rewarded by the sight of the young rector reading the service in the midst of a throng of bareheaded pitmen such as no Claversham eye had ever seen before—even this, which in ordinary times would have furnished food for talk for

a month at least, went for little now. It was discussed indeed for an evening, and then recalled only for the sake of the light which it was supposed to throw upon Mr. Lindo's fate.

That gentleman, indeed, continued to present to the public an unmoved face. But in private, in the seclusion of his study—the lordly room which he had prized and appreciated from the first, taking its spacious dignity as the measure of his success—he wore no mask. There he had—as all men have, the man of destiny and the conscript alike—his solitary hours of courage and depression, anxiety and resignation. Of hope also; for even now—let us not paint him greater than he was—he clung to the possibility that Lord Dynmore, whom everyone agreed in describing as irascible and hasty, but generous at bottom, would refuse to receive his resignation of the living, and this in such terms as would enable him to remain without sacrificing his self-respect. There would be a victory indeed, and at times he could not help dwelling on the thought of it.

Consequently, when Mrs. Baxter, four days after the funeral, ushered in the archdeacon, and the young rector, turning at his writing-table, read his fate in the old gentleman's eyes, the news came upon him with crushing weight. Yet he did not give way. He rose and welcomed his visitor with a brave face. 'So the bearer of the bow-string has come at last!' he said lightly, as the two met on the hearthrug.

The archdeacon held his hand a few seconds longer than was necessary. 'Yes,' he said, 'I am afraid that is about what I am. I am sorry to bring you such news, Lindo—more sorry than I can tell you.' And, having got so far, he dropped his hat and picked it up again in a great hurry, and for a moment did not look at his companion.

'After all,' the rector said manfully, 'it is the only news I had a right to expect.'

'There is something in that,' the archdeacon admitted, sitting down. 'That is so, perhaps. All the same,' he went on, looking about him unhappily, and rubbing his head in ill-concealed irritation, 'if I had known how the earl would take it, I should not have advised you to make any concessions. No, I should not. But, there, he is an odd man—odder than I thought.'

'He accepts my offer to resign, of course?'

'Yes.'

'And that is all?' the rector said, a little huskiness in his tone.

'That is all,' the archdeacon replied, rubbing his head again. It was plain that he had hard work to keep his vexation within bounds.

'Well, I must not complain because he has taken me at my word,' the rector said, recovering himself a little.

'Well, I hoped the bishop might have had a word to say to it,' the archdeacon grumbled. 'But he had not, and I could not get to see his wife. He spoke very highly of your conduct, but he did not see his way clear, he said, to interfering.'

'I scarcely see how he could,' Lindo answered slowly.

'Well, I do not know. Bonamy's representation in the churchwardens' names was very strong—very strong indeed, coming from them, you know.'

Lindo reddened. 'There is an odd man for you, if you like,' he said impulsively. He was glad, perhaps, to change the subject. 'He has scarcely said a civil word to me since I came. He even began an action against me. Yet when this happened he turned round and in his way fought for me.'

'Well, that is Bonamy all over!' the archdeacon answered, almost with enthusiasm. 'He is rough and crabbed, but he has the instincts of a gentleman, which are the greater credit to him, since he is a self-made man. I think I can tell you something about him, though, which you do not know.'

'Indeed?' said Lindo mechanically.

'Yes. It has to do with your letter, too. I had it from Lord Dynmore. In the first flush of his anger, it seems, he went to Bonamy and directed him to take the necessary steps to eject you. He is not the earl's solicitor, and he must have seen an excellent opportunity of getting hold of the Dynmore business through this. He could not but see it. Nevertheless, he declined.'

'Why?' the rector asked shortly.

The archdeacon shrugged his shoulders. 'Ah! that I cannot say,' he answered. 'I only know that he did, putting forward some scruple or other which sent the earl off almost foaming with rage; and, of course, sent off with him Bonamy's chance of his business.'

'He is a strange man!' Lindo sighed as he spoke.

The archdeacon took a turn up the room. 'Now,' he said, coming back, 'I want to talk to you about another man.'

'Clode?' the rector muttered.

'Well, yes; you have guessed it,' the elder clergyman assented. 'The truth is, I am to offer him the living if you report well of him.'

'I do not like him,' Lindo said briefly.

'To be candid,' replied the other as briefly, 'neither do I, now.'

To that Lindo for a moment said nothing. The young man had fallen into an old attitude, and stood with his foot on the fender, his head bent, his eyes fixed on the fire. His eyes grew hard, the line of his lips lengthened. He was passing through a temptation. Here was a brave vengeance ready to his hand. The man who had behaved badly, heartlessly, disloyally to him, who had taken part against him, and been hard and unfriendly from the moment of Lord Dynmore's return, was now in his power. He had only to say that he distrusted Clode, that he suspected him of being unscrupulous, even that their connection had not been satisfactory to himself—and the thing was done. Clode would not have the living.

Yet he hesitated to say those words. He felt that the thing was a temptation. He remembered that Clode had worked well in the parish, and that his only offence was a private one. And, not at once, but after a pause, he gulped down the temptation, and, looking up with a flushed face, spoke. 'Yes,' he said, 'I must report well of him—in the parish, that is. He is a good worker. I am bound to say as much as that, I think.'

The archdeacon shrugged his shoulders once more. 'Right!' he said, with a certain curtness which hid his secret disgust. 'I suppose that is all, then. Will you come with me and tell him?'

'No,' the rector answered very decidedly, 'certainly I will not.'

'It will look well,' the other still suggested.

'No,' Lindo replied again, almost in anger, 'I cannot sincerely congratulate the man, and I will not!'

Nor would he budge from that resolve; and when the archdeacon called at the curate's lodgings a few minutes later, he called alone. The man he sought was out, however. 'Mr. Clode is at the Reading-Room, I think, sir,' the landlady said, with her deepest curtsey. And thither, accordingly, after a moment's hesitation, the archdeacon went.

The gas in the big, barely furnished room, which we have visited more than once, had just been lit, but the blinds still remained up; and in this mingling of lights the place looked less home-like and more uncomfortable than usual. There were three people in the room when the archdeacon entered. Two sat reading by the fire, their backs to the door. The third—the future rector—was standing up near one of the windows, taking advantage of the last rays of daylight to read the *Times*, which he held open

before him. The archdeacon cast a casual glance at the others, and then stepped across to him and touched him on the shoulder.

Clode turned with a start. He had not heard the approaching footstep. One glance at the new-comer's face, however, set his blood in a glow. It told him, or almost told him, all; and instinctively he dropped his eyes, that the other might not read in them his triumph and exultation.

The archdeacon's first words confirmed him in his hopes. 'I have some good news for you, Mr. Clode,' he said, smiling benevolently. He had of late distrusted the curate, as we have seen; but he was a man of kindly nature, and such a man cannot convey good tidings without entering into the recipient's feelings. 'I saw Lord Dynmore yesterday,' he continued.

'Indeed,' said the curate a little thickly. His face had grown hot, but the increasing darkness concealed this.

'Yes,' the archdeacon resumed, in a confidential tone which was yet pretty audible through the room. 'You have heard, no doubt, that Mr. Lindo has resigned the living?'

The curate nodded. At that moment he dared not speak. A dreadful thought was in his mind. What if the archdeacon's good news was news that the earl declined to receive the resignation? Some people might call that good news! The mere thought struck him dumb.

The archdeacon's next words resolved his doubts. 'Frankly,' the elder man continued in a genial tone, 'I am sorry—sorry that circumstances have forced him to take so extreme a step. But having said that, Mr. Clode, I have done for the present with regret, and may come to pleasanter matter. I have to congratulate you. I am happy to say that Lord Dynmore, whom I saw yesterday, has authorised me to offer the living to you.'

The newspaper rustled in the curate's grasp, and for a moment he did not answer. Then he said huskily, 'To me?'

'Yes,' the archdeacon answered expansively—it was certainly a pleasant task he had in hand, and he could not help beaming over it. 'To you, Mr. Clode. On one condition only,' he continued, 'which is usual enough in all such cases, and I venture to think is particularly natural in this case. I mean that you have your late rector's good word.'

'Mr. Lindo's good word?' the curate stammered.

'Of course,' the unconscious archdeacon answered.

The curate's jaw dropped; but by an effort he forced a ghastly

smile. 'To be sure,' he said. 'There will be no difficulty about that, I think.'

'No,' replied the other, 'for I have just seen him, and can say at once that he is prepared to give it you. He has behaved throughout in a most generous manner, and the consequence is that I have nothing more to do except to offer you my congratulations on your preferment.'

For a moment Clode could scarcely believe in his happiness. In the short space of two minutes he had tasted to the full both the pleasure of hope and the pang of despair. Could it be that all that was over already? That the period of waiting and uncertainty was past and gone? That the prize to which he had looked so long—and with the prize the woman he loved—was his at last?—was actually in his grasp?

His head reeled, great as was his self-control, and a haze rose before his eyes. As this passed away he became conscious that the archdeacon was shaking his hand with great heartiness, and that the thing was real! He was rector, or as good as rector, of Clavershame. The object of his ambition was his! He was happy: perhaps it was the happiest moment of his life. He had even time to wonder whether he could not do Lindo a good turn—whether he could not somehow make it up to him.

'You are very good,' he muttered, gratefully pressing the archdeacon's hand.

'I am glad it is not a stranger,' that gentleman replied heartily. 'Oh,' he continued, turning suddenly and speaking in a different tone, 'is that you, Mr. Bonamy? Well, there can be no harm in your hearing the news also. You are people's warden, of course, and have a kind of claim to hear it early. To be sure you have.'

'What is the news?' Mr. Bonamy asked rather shortly. He had risen and drawn near unnoticed, Jack Smith behind him. 'Do I understand that Lord Dynmore has accepted the rector's resignation?'

'That is so.'

'And that he proposes to present Mr. Clode?' the lawyer continued, looking hard at the curate as he named him.

'Precisely,' replied the archdeacon, without hesitation.

'I hope you have no objection, Mr. Bonamy,' the curate said, bowing slightly with a gracious air. He could afford to be gracious now. He even felt good—as men in such moments do.

But in the lawyer's response there was no graciousness, nor much apparent goodness. 'I am afraid,' he said, standing up

gaunt and stiff, with a scowl on his face, 'that I must take advantage of that saving clause, Mr. Clode. I am people's warden, as the archdeacon says, and I may not unproperly claim to have some interest in this, and frankly I object to your appointment—to your appointment as rector here.'

'You object!' the curate stammered, between wrath and wonder.

'Bless me!' the archdeacon exclaimed in unmixed astonishment. 'This is quite out of order. What do you mean?'

'Just what I say. I object,' repeated the lawyer firmly. This time Clode said nothing, but his eyes flashed, and he drew himself up, his face dark with passion. 'Shall I state my objection now?' Mr. Bonamy continued, with the utmost gravity. 'It is not quite formal, but—very well, I will do so. I have rather a curious story to tell, and I must go back a short time. When Mr. Lindo's honesty in accepting the living was first called in question about a month ago, he referred to the letters in which Lord Dynmore's agents conveyed the offer to him. He had those letters by him. Naturally, he had preserved them with care, and he began to regard them in the light of valuable evidence on his behalf, since they showed the facts brought to his knowledge when he accepted the living. I have said that he had preserved them with care; and, indeed, he is prepared to say to-day, that from the time of his arrival here until now, they have never, with his knowledge or consent, passed out of his possession.'

The lawyer's rasping voice ceased for a moment. Stephen Clode's face was a shade paler, but away from the gas-jets this could not be distinguished. He was arming himself to meet whatever shock was to come, while below this voluntary action of the brain his mind ran in an undercurrent of fierce passionate anger against himself—anger that he had ever meddled with those fatal letters. Oh, the folly, the uselessness, the danger of that act, as he saw them now!

'Nevertheless,' Mr. Bonamy resumed in the same even, pitiless tone, 'when Mr. Lindo referred to these letters—which he kept, I should add, in a locked cupboard in his library—he found that the first in date, and the most important of them all, had been mutilated.'

The curate's brow cleared. 'What on earth,' he broke out, 'has this to do with me, Mr. Bonamy?' And he laughed—a laugh of relief and triumph. The lawyer's last words had lifted a weight from his heart. They had found a mare's nest after all.

'Quite so!' the archdeacon chimed in with good-natured

fussiness. 'What has all this to do with the matter in hand, or with Mr. Clode, Mr. Bonamy? I fail to see.'

'In a moment I will show you,' the lawyer answered. Then he paused, and, taking a letter-case from his pocket, leisurely extracted from it a small piece of paper. 'I will first ask Mr. Clode,' he continued, 'to tell us if he supplied Mr. Lindo with the names of a firm of Birmingham solicitors.'

'Certainly I did,' replied the curate haughtily.

'And you gave him their address, I think?'

'I did.'

'Perhaps you can tell me, then, whether that is the address you wrote for him,' continued the lawyer smoothly, as he held out the paper for the curate's inspection.

'It is,' Clode answered at once. 'I wrote it for Mr. Lindo, in my own room, and gave it him there. But I fail to see what all this has to do with the point you have raised,' he continued with considerable heat.

'It has just this to do with it, Mr. Clode,' the lawyer answered drily, a twinkle in his eyes—'that this address is written on the reverse side of the very piece of paper which is missing from Mr. Lindo's letter—the important letter I have described. And I wish to ask you, and I think it will be to your interest to give as clear an answer to the question as possible, how you came into possession of this scrap of paper.'

The curate glared at his questioner. 'I do not understand you,' he stammered. And he held out his hand for the paper.

'I think you will when you look at both sides of the sheet,' replied the lawyer, handing it to him. 'On one side there is the address you wrote. On the other are the last sentence and signature of a letter from Messrs. Gearns and Baker to Mr. Lindo. The question is a very simple one. How did you get possession of this piece of paper?'

Clode was silent—silent, though he knew that the archdeacon was looking at him, and that a single hearty spontaneous denial might avert suspicion. He stood holding the paper in his hand, and gazing stupidly at the damning words, utterly unable to comprehend for the moment how they came to be there. Little by little, however, as the benumbing effects of the surprise wore off, his thoughts went back to the evening when the address was written, and he remembered how the rector had come in and surprised him, and how he had huddled away the letters. In his

disorder, no doubt, he had left one lying among his own papers, and made the fatal mistake of tearing from it the scrap on which he had written the address.

He saw it all as he stood there, still gazing at the piece of paper, while his rugged face grew darkly red and then again a miserable sallow, and the perspiration sprang out upon his forehead. He felt that the archdeacon's eyes were upon him, that the archdeacon was waiting for him to speak. He saw the mistake he had made, but his brain, usually so ready, failed to supply him with the explanation he required.

'You understand?' Mr. Bonamy said slowly. 'The question is, how this letter came to be in your room that evening, Mr. Clode. That is the question.'

'I cannot say,' he answered huskily. He was so shaken by the unexpected nature of the attack, and by the strange and ominous way in which the evidence against him had arisen, that he had not the courage to look up and face his accuser. 'I think—nay, I am sure, indeed—that the rector must have given me the paper,' he explained, after an awkward pause.

'He is positive he did not,' Mr. Bonamy answered.

Then Clode recovered himself and looked up. After all, it was only his word against another's. 'Possibly he is,' he said, 'and yet he may be mistaken. I cannot otherwise see how the paper could have come into my hands. You do not really mean,' he continued with a smile, which was almost easy, 'to charge me with stealing the letter, I suppose?'

'Well, to be quite candid, I do,' Mr. Bonamy replied curtly. Nor was this unexpected slap in the face rendered more tolerable by the qualification he hastened to add—'or getting it stolen.'

The curate started. 'This is not to be borne,' he cried hotly. He looked at the archdeacon as if expecting him to interfere. But he found that gentleman's face grave and troubled, and, seeing he must expect no help from him at present, he continued, 'Do you dare to make so serious an accusation on such evidence as this, Mr. Bonamy?'

'On that,' the lawyer replied, pointing to the paper, 'and on other evidence besides.'

The curate flinched. Had they found Felton, the earl's servant? Had they any more scraps of paper—any more self-wrought damning evidence of that kind? It was only by an effort, which was apparent to one at least of his hearers, that he

gathered himself together, and answered, with a show of promptitude and ease, 'Other evidence? What, I ask? Produce it!'

'Here it is,' said Mr. Bonamy, pointing to Jack Smith, who had been standing at his elbow throughout the discussion.

'What has he to do with it?' Clode muttered with dry lips.

'Only this,' the barrister said quietly, addressing himself to the archdeacon. 'That some time ago I saw Mr. Clode replace a packet in the cupboard in the rector's library. He only discovered my presence in the room when the cupboard door was open, and his agitation on observing me struck me as strange. Afterwards I made inquiries of Mr. Lindo, without telling him my reason, and learned that Mr. Clode had no business at that cupboard—which was, in fact, devoted to the rector's private papers.'

'Perhaps, Mr. Clode, you will explain that,' said the lawyer with quiet triumph.

He might have denied it had he spoken out at once. He might have given Jack the lie. But he saw with sudden and horrible clearness how this thing fitted that other thing, and this evidence corroborated that; and he lost his presence of mind, and for a moment stood speechless, glaring at his new accuser. He did not need to look at the archdeacon to be sure that his face was no longer grave only, but stern and suspicious. The gas-jets flared before his eyes and dazzled him. The room seemed to be turning. He could not answer. It was only when he had stood for an age, as it seemed to him, dumb and self-convicted before those three faces, that he summoned up courage to mutter, 'It is false. It is all false, I say!' and to stamp his foot on the floor.

But no one answered him, and he quailed. His nerves were shaken. He, who on ordinary occasions prided himself on his tact and management, dared not now urge another word in his own defence lest some new piece of evidence should arise to give him the lie. The meaning silence of his accusers and his own conscience were too much for him. And, suddenly snatching up his hat, which lay on a chair beside him, he rushed from the room.

He had not gone fifty yards along the pavement before he recognised the mad folly of this retreat—the utter surrender of all his hopes and ambitions which it meant. But it was too late. The strong man had met a stronger. His very triumph and victory had gone some way towards undoing him, by rendering him more open to surprise and less prepared for sudden attack. Now it was too late to do more than repent. He saw that.

Hurrying through the darkness, heedless whither he went, he invented a dozen stories to explain his conduct. But always the archdeacon's grave face rose before him, and he rejected the clever fictions and the sophisms in support of them, which his ingenuity was now so quick to suggest.

How he cursed the madness, the insensate folly, which had wrecked him! Had he only let matters take their own course and stood aside, he would have gained his ends! For a minute and a half he had been as good as rector of Claversham. And now!

Laura Hammond, crossing the hall after tea, heard the outer door open suddenly behind her, and, feeling the cold gust of air which entered, stopped and turned, and saw him standing on the mat. He had let himself in in this way on more than one occasion before, and it was not that which in a moment caused her heart to sink. She had been expecting him all day, for she knew the crisis was imminent, and had been hourly looking for news. But she had not been expecting him in this guise. There was a strange disorder in his air and manner. He was wet and splashed with mud. He held his hat in his hand, as if he had been walking bareheaded in the rain. His eyes shone with a wild light, and he looked at her oddly. She turned and went towards him. 'Is it you?' she said timidly.

'Oh, yes, it is I,' he answered, with a forced laugh. 'I want to speak to you.' And he let drop the *portière*, which he had hitherto held in his hand.

There was a light in the breakfast-room, which opened on the hall, and she led the way into that room. He followed her and closed the door behind him. She pointed to a chair, but he did not take it. 'What is it?' she said, looking up at him in real alarm. 'What is the matter, Stephen?'

'Everything!' he answered, with another laugh. 'I am leaving Claversham.'

'You are leaving?' she said incredulously.

'Yes, leaving!' he answered.

'To-night?' she stammered.

'Well, not to-night,' he answered, with rude irony. 'To-morrow. I have been within an ace of getting the living, and I—I have lost it. That is all.'

Her cheek turned a shade paler, and she laid one hand on the table to steady herself. 'I am so sorry,' she murmured.

He did not see her tremor; he heard only her words, and he

resented them bitterly. 'Have you nothing more to say than that?' he cried.

She had much more to say—or, rather, had she said all that was in her mind she would have had. But his tone helped her to recover herself—helped her to play the part on which she had long ago decided. In her way she loved this man, and her will had melted at sight of him standing downcast and defeated before her. Had he attacked her on the side of her affections he might have done much—he might have prevailed. But his hard words recalled her to her natural self. 'What would you have me say?' she answered, looking steadily across the table at him. Something, she began to see, had happened besides the loss of the living—something which had hurt him sorely. And as she discerned this, she compared his dishevelled, untidy dress with the luxury of the room, and shivered at the thought of the precipice on the brink of which she had paused.

He did not answer.

'What would you have me say?' she repeated more firmly.

'If you do not know, I cannot teach you,' he retorted, with a sneer.

'You have no right to say that,' she replied bravely. 'You remember our compact.'

'You intend to keep to it?' he asked scornfully.

She had no doubt about that now, and she summoned up her courage by an effort. 'Certainly I do,' she murmured. 'I thought you understood me. I tried to make my meaning clear.'

Clode did not answer her at once. He stood looking at her, his eyes glowing. He knew that his only hope, if hope there might be, lay in gaining some word from her now—now, before any rumour to his disadvantage should get abroad in the town. But his temper, long restrained, was so infuriated by disappointment and defeat, that for the moment love did not prevail with him. He knew that a tender word might do much, but he could not frame it. When he did at last find tongue it was only to say, 'And that is your final decision?'

'It is,' she answered in a low voice. She did not dare to look up at him.

'And all you have to say to me?'

'Yes, all. Except that I wish you well. I shall always wish you well, Mr. Clode,' she muttered.

'Thank you,' he answered coldly.

So coldly, and with so much composure, that she did not guess the gust of hatred of all things and all men which was in his heart. He was beside himself with love, rage, disappointment. For a moment longer he stood gazing at her downcast face. But she did not look up at him; and presently, in a strange silence, he turned and went out of the room.

CHAPTER XXV.

HUMBLE PIE.

THE success of reticence is great. Mr. Bonamy and his nephew, as they went home to tea after their victory, plumed themselves not a little upon the proof of this which they had just given Mr. Clode. They said little, it is true, even to one another, but more than once Mr. Bonamy chuckled in a particularly dry manner, and at the top of the street Jack made an observation. 'You think the archdeacon was satisfied?' he asked, turning to his companion for a moment.

'Absolutely,' quoth Mr. Bonamy; and he strode on with one hand in his pocket, his coat-tails flying, and his money jingling in a manner inimitable by any other Claversham person.

At tea they were both silent upon the subject, but the lawyer presently let drop the fact that the earl had accepted the rector's resignation. Jack, watchfully jealous, poor fellow, yet in his jealousy loyal to the core, glanced involuntarily at Kate to see what effect the news produced upon her; and then glanced swiftly away again. Not so swiftly, however, that the change in the girl's face escaped him. He saw it flush with mingled pride and alarm, and then grow grave and thoughtful. After that she kept her eyes averted from him, and he talked busily to Daintry. 'I must be leaving you to-morrow,' he said by and by, as they rose from the table.

'You will be coming back again?' Mr. Bonamy answered, interrupting a loud wail from Daintry. It should be explained that Jack had not stayed through the whole of these weeks at Claversham, but had twice left for some days on circuit business. Mr. Bonamy thought he was meditating another of these disappearances.

'I should like to do so,' Jack answered quietly, 'but I must get back to London now.'

'Well, your room will be ready for you whenever you like to come to us,' Mr. Bonamy replied with crabbed graciousness. And he fully meant what he said. He had grown used to Jack's company. He saw, too, the change his presence had made in the girls' lives, and possibly he entertained some thoughts of a greater change which the cousin might make in the life of one of them.

So he was sorry to lose Jack. But Daintry was inconsolable. When she and Kate were alone together she made her moan, sitting in a great chair three sizes too big for her, with her legs sprawling before her, her hands on the chair-arms, and her eyes on the fire. 'Oh, dear, what shall we do when he is gone, Kate?' she said disconsolately. 'Won't it be miserable?'

Kate, who was bending over her work, and had been unusually silent for some time, looked up with a start and a rush of colour to her cheeks. 'When who is gone—oh, you mean Jack!' she said rather incoherently.

'Of course I do,' Daintry answered crossly. 'But you never did care for Jack.'

'You have no right to say that,' Kate answered quickly, letting her work drop for the moment. 'I think Jack is one of the noblest, the most generous—yes,' she continued quickly, 'the bravest man I have ever known, Daintry.'

Her voice trembled, and Daintry saw with surprise that her eyes were full of tears. 'I never thought you felt like that about him,' the younger girl answered penitently.

'Perhaps I did not a little while back,' Kate answered gently, as she took up her work again. 'I know him better now, that is all.'

It was quite true. She knew him better now. A fellow-feeling makes us wondrous kind. Love, which blinds our eyes to some things, opens them to others. Had Jack offered Kate 'Their Wedding Journey' now she might still have asked him to change the book for another, but assuredly she would not have told him its title sounded silly, nor hurt his feelings by so much as a look.

It was quite true that she thought him all she said, that her eyes grew moist for his sake. But his was the minute only; the hour was another's. Daintry, proceeding to speculate gloomily on the dulness of Claversham without Jack, thought her sister was attending to her, whereas Kate's thoughts were far away now, centred on a fair head and a bright boyish face, and a solitary room in which she pictured Reginald Lindo sitting alone and

despondent, the short-lived brilliance of his Claversham career already extinguished. What were his thoughts, she wondered. Was he regretting—for the strongest have their hours of weakness—the step he had taken? Was he blaming her for the advice she had given? Was he giving a thought to her at all, or only planning the new life on which he must now enter—forming the new hopes which must henceforth cheer him on?

Kate let her work drop and looked dreamily before her. Assuredly the prospect was a dull and uninviting one. Before *his* coming there had always been the unknown something, which a girl's future holds—a possibility of change, of living a happier, fuller life. But now she had nothing of this kind before her. He had come and robbed her even of this, and given her in return only regret and humiliation, and a few—a very few—hours of strange pleasure and sunshine and womanly pride in a woman's influence nobly used. Yet would she have had it otherwise? No, not for all the unknown possibilities of change, not though Claversham life should stretch its dulness unbroken through a century.

She was sitting alone in the dining-room next morning, Mr. Bonamy being at the office, and Daintry out shopping, when the maid came in and announced that Mr. Lindo was at the door and wished to see her. 'Are you sure that he did not ask for Mr. Bonamy?' Kate said, rising and laying down her work with outward composure and secret agitation.

'No; he asked particularly for you, miss,' the servant answered, standing with her hand on the door.

'Very well; you can show him in here,' Kate replied, casting an eye round her, but disdaining to remove the signs of domestic employment which met its scrutiny. 'He has come to say good-bye,' she thought to herself; and with a little gasp she schooled herself to play her part fitly and close the little drama with decency and reserve.

He came in looking very thoughtful. She need not have feared for her father's papers, her sister's dog's-eared Ollendorf, or her own sewing. He did not so much as glance at them. She thought she saw business in his eye, and she said as he advanced, 'Did you wish to see me or my father, Mr. Lindo?'

'You, Miss Bonamy,' he answered, shaking hands with her. 'You have heard the news, I suppose?'

'Yes,' she replied soberly. 'I am so very sorry. I fear—I mean I regret now, that when you——'

'Asked for advice'—he continued, helping her out with a grave smile. He had taken the great leather-covered easy-chair on the other side of the fireplace, and was sitting forward in it, toying with his hat.

'Yes,' she said, colouring—'if you like to put it in that very flattering form—I regret now that I presumed to give it, Mr. Lindo.'

'I am sorry for that,' he answered, looking up at her as he spoke.

She felt herself colouring anew. 'Why?' she asked rather tremulously.

'Because I have come to ask your advice again. You will not refuse to give it me?'

She looked at him in surprise; with a little annoyance even. It was absurd. Why should he come to her in this way? Why, because on one occasion, when circumstances had impelled him to speak and her to answer, she had presumed to advise—why should he again come to her of set purpose? It was ridiculous of him. 'I think I must refuse,' she said gravely and a little formally. 'I know nothing of business.'

'It is not upon a matter of business,' he answered.

She uttered a sigh of impatience. 'I think you are very foolish, Mr. Lindo. Why do you not go to my father?'

'Well, because it is—because it is on a rather delicate matter,' he answered impulsively.

'Still I do not see why you should bring it to me,' she objected, with a flash in her grey eyes, and many memories in her mind.

'Well, I will tell you why I bring it to you,' he answered bluntly. 'Because I acted on your advice the other day; and that, you see, Miss Bonamy, has put me in this fix; and—and, in fact, made other advice necessary, don't you see?'

'I see you are inclined to be somewhat ungenerous,' she answered. 'But if it must be so, pray go on.'

He rose slowly and stood leaning against the mantelshelf in his favourite attitude, his foot on the fender. 'I will be as short as I can,' he said, a nervousness she did not fail to note in his manner. 'Perhaps you will kindly hear me to the end before you solve my problem for me. It will help me a little, I think, if I may put my case in the third person. Miss Bonamy'—he paused on the name and cleared his throat, and then went on more quickly—'a man I know, young and keen, and at the time

successful—successful beyond his hopes, so that others of his age and standing looked on him with envy, came one day to know a girl, and, from the moment of knowing her, to admire and esteem her. She was not only very beautiful, but he thought he saw in her, almost from the first hour of their acquaintance, such noble and generous qualities as all men, even the weakest, would fain imagine in the woman they love.'

Kate moved suddenly in her chair as if to rise. Then she sat back again, and he went on.

'This was a weak man,' he said in a low voice. 'He had had small experience; let that be some excuse for him. He was entering at this time on a new field of work in which he found himself of importance and fancied himself of greater importance. There he had frequent opportunities of meeting the woman I have mentioned, who had already made an impression on him. But his head was turned. He discovered that for certain small and unworthy reasons her goodness and her fairness were not recognised by those among whom he mixed, and he had the meanness to swim with the current and to strive to think no more of the woman to whom his heart had gone out. He acted like a cur, in fact, and presently he had his reward. Evil times came upon him. The position he loved was threatened. Finally he lost it, and found himself again where he had started in life—a poor curate without influence or brilliant prospects. Then—it seems an ignoble, a mean, and a miserable thing to say—he found out for certain that he loved this woman, and could imagine no greater honour or happiness than to have her for his wife.'

He paused a moment, and stole a glance at her. Kate sat motionless and still, her lips compressed and her eyes hidden by their long lashes, her gaze fixed apparently on the fire. Save that her face was slightly flushed, and that she breathed quickly, he might have fancied that she did not understand, or even that she had not heard. When he spoke again, after waiting anxiously and vainly for any sign, his voice was husky and agitated. 'Will you tell me, Miss Bonamy, what he should do?' he said. 'Should he ask her to forgive him and to trust him, or should he go away and be silent?'

She did not speak.

'Kate, will you not tell me? Can I not hope to be forgiven?' He was stooping beside her now, and his hand almost touched her hair.

Then, at last, she looked up at him. 'Will not my advice come a little late?' she whispered tremulously and yet with a smile—a smile which was at once bright and tearful and eloquent beyond words.

Afterwards she thought of a dozen things she should have said to him—about his certainty of himself, about her father; but at the time none of these occurred to her. If he had come to her with his hands full, it would certainly have been otherwise. But she saw him poor through his own act, and her pride left her. When he took her in his arms and kissed her, she said not a word. And he said only, 'My darling!'

. . . . . .

The rich can afford to be niggardly. Lindo did not stay long, the question he had to put once answered, his claim to happiness once allowed. When Mr. Bonamy came in half an hour later, he found Kate alone. There was an austere elation in his eye which for a moment led her to think that he had heard her news. His first words, however, dispelled the idea. 'I have just seen Lord Dynmore,' he said, taking his coat-skirts on his arms and speaking with a geniality which showed that he was moved out of his every-day self. 'He has—he has considerably surprised me.'

'Indeed?' said Kate, blushing and conscious, half-attentive and half given up to thinking how she should tell her own tale.

'Yes. He has very much surprised me. He has asked me to undertake the agency of his property in this part of the country.'

Kate dropped her sewing in genuine surprise. 'No?' she said. 'Has he, indeed?'

Mr. Bonamy, pursing up his lips to keep back the smile of complacency which would force its way, let his eyes rove round the room. 'Yes,' he said, 'I do not mind saying here that I am rather flattered. Of course I should not say as much out of doors.'

'Oh, papa, I am so glad,' she cried, rising. An unwonted softness in her tone touched and pleased him.

'Yes,' he continued, 'I am to go over to the Park to-morrow to lunch with him and talk over matters. He told me something else which will astonish you. He has behaved very handsomely to Mr. Lindo. It seems he saw him early this morning, after having an interview with the archdeacon, and offered him the country living of Pocklington, in Oxfordshire—worth, I believe, about five hundred a year. He is going to give the vicar of Pocklington the rectory here.'

Kate's face was scarlet. 'But I thought—I understood,' she stammered, 'that Mr. Clode was to be rector here?'

'Not at all,' said Mr. Bonamy, with some asperity. 'The whole thing was settled before ten o'clock this morning. Mary told me at the door that Lindo had been here since, so I supposed he had told you something about it.'

'He did not tell me a word of it!' Kate answered impulsively, the generous trick her lover had played her breaking in upon her mind in all its fulness. 'Not a word of it! But papa'—with a pause and then a rush of words—'he asked me to be his wife, and I—I told him I would.'

For a moment Mr. Bonamy stared at his daughter as if he thought she had lost her wits. Probably since his boyhood he had never been so much astonished. 'I was talking of Mr. Lindo,' he said at length, speaking with laborious clearness. 'You are referring to your cousin, I fancy.'

'No,' Kate said, striving with her happy confusion. 'I mean Mr. Lindo, papa.'

'Indeed! indeed!' Mr. Bonamy answered after another pause, speaking still more slowly, and gazing at her as if he had never seen her before, nor anything at all like her. 'You have a good deal surprised me. And I am not easily surprised, I think. Not easily, I think.'

'But you are not angry with me, papa?' she murmured rather tearfully.

For a moment he still stared at her in silence, unable to overcome his astonishment. Then by a great effort he recovered himself. 'Oh, no,' he said, with a smack of his old causticity, 'I do not see why I should be angry with you, Kate. Indeed, I may say I foretold this. I always said that young man would introduce great changes, and he has done it. He has fulfilled my words to the letter, my dear!'

CHAPTER XXVI.

LOOSE ENDS.

Dr. Gregg was one of the first persons in the town to hear of the late rector's engagement. His reception of the news was characteristic. 'I don't believe it!' he shrieked. 'I don't believe it! It is all rubbish! What has he got to marry upon, I should like to know?'

His informant ventured to mention the living of Pocklington.

'I don't believe it!' the little doctor shrieked. 'If he had got that he would see her far enough before he would marry her. Do you think I am such a fool as to believe that?'

'But you see, Bonamy, the earl's agency will be rather a lift in the world for him. And he has money.'

'I don't believe it!' shrieked Gregg again.

But, alas! he did. He knew that these things were true, and when he next met Bonamy he smiled a wry smile, and tried to swallow his teeth, and grovelled, still with the native snarl curling his lips at intervals. The doctor, indeed, had to suffer a good deal of unhappiness in these days. Clode, about whom he had boasted largely, was conspicuous by his absence. Lord Dynmore's carriage might be seen any morning in front of the Bonamy offices. And rumour said that the earl had taken a strange fancy to the young clergyman whom he had so belaboured. Things seemed to Gregg and to some other people in Clavershame to be horribly out of joint at this time.

Among others, poor Mrs. Hammond found her brain somewhat disordered. To the curate's unaccountable withdrawal, as to the translation of the late rector to Pocklington, she could easily reconcile herself. But to Mr. Lindo's engagement to the lawyer's daughter, and to the surprising intimacy between the earl and Mr. Bonamy, she could not so readily make up her mind. Why, it was reported that the earl had walked into town and taken tea at Mr. Bonamy's house! Still, facts are stubborn things; it is ill work kicking against them, nor was it long before Mrs. Hammond was heard to say that the lawyer's conduct in supporting Mr. Lindo in his trouble had produced a very favourable impression on her mind, and prepared her to look upon him in a new light.

And Laura? Laura, during these changes, showed herself particularly bright and sparkling. She was not of a nature to feel even defeat very deeply, or to philosophise much over past mistakes. Her mother saw no change in her—nay, she marvelled, recalling her daughter's intimacy with Mr. Clode and the obstinacy she had exhibited in siding with him, that Laura could so completely put him out of her mind and thoughts. But the least sensitive feel sometimes. The most thoughtless have their moments of care. Even the cat, with its love of home and comfort, will sometimes wander on a wet night. And there are times when Laura, doubting the future and weary of the present, wishes

she had had the courage to do as her heart bade her, and make the plunge, careless what the world, and her rivals, might say of her marriage to a curate. For Clode's rugged face and masculine will dominate her still. Though a year has elapsed, and she has not heard of him, nor probably will hear of him now, she thinks of him with regret and soreness. She had not much to give, but to her sorrow she knows now that she gave it to him, and that in that struggle for supremacy both were losers.

The good wine last. Kate broke the news to Jack herself, and found it no news. 'Yes, I have just seen Lindo,' he answered quietly, taking her hand, and looking her in the face with dry eyes. 'May he make you very happy, Kate, and—well, I can wish you nothing better than that.' Then Kate broke down and cried bitterly. When she recovered herself Jack was gone.

If you were to describe that scene to Jack Smith's friends in the Temple they would jeer at you. They would cover you with ridicule and gibes. There is no one so keen, so sharp, so matter-of-fact, so certain to succeed as he, they say. They have only one fault to find with him, that he works too hard; that he bids fair to become one of those legal machines which may be seen any evening taking in fuel at solitary club tables, and returning afterwards to dusty chambers, with the regularity of clockwork. But there is one thing even in his present life which his Temple friends do not know, and which gives me hope of him. Week by week there comes to him a letter from the country from a long-limbed girl in short frocks, whose hero he is. Time, which, like Procrustes' bed, brings frocks and legs to the same length at last, heals wounds also. When a day not far distant now shall show him Daintry in the bloom of budding womanhood, is it to be thought that Jack will resist her? I think not. But, be that as it may, with no better savour than that of his loyalty, the silent loyalty of an English friend, could the chronicle of a Bayard—much less the tale of a country town—come to an end.

THE END.

THE MISTLETOE BOUGH.

No plant on earth has ever aroused so many kinds of interest on all possible grounds as the mystic mistletoe. Take it how you will, that strange shrub is a wonder. From every point of view it teems with curiosity. Its parasitic mode of growth, its paradoxical greenness among the bare boughs of winter, its pale and ghostly berries, its sticky fruit, filled full with viscid bird-lime, have all aroused profound and respectful attention from the very earliest ages. Then its religious importance in so many countries and ages, its connection with Christmas and the mid-winter Saturnalia, its social survival to our own time as the Yule-tide symbol, and its modern relation to the pleasing anachronism of indiscriminate kissing, all invest it alike with an additional factitious importance. Yet, strange to say, the full story of the mistletoe has never yet been written at any adequate length. It has been left for the nineteenth century and the present humble scribe to attempt for the first time in the world's history an exhaustive account of the plant and its cult,—the mistletoe itself and the superstitions based upon it.

The origin of the mistletoe, like that of Mr. Jeames de la Pluche, is to a certain extent 'wrop in mystery.' Evolutionists as yet can tell us but little as to its probable line of development from earlier ancestors. It belongs, indeed, to a small family of parasitical plants, all of them as gentlemanly in their habits as the Tite-Barnacles themselves, being absolutely dependent upon other trees for a part at least of their livelihood, and showing very little affinity to any other order. It is conjectured, to be sure—I believe with justice—that this isolated group of parasitic shrubs may be honeysuckles gone wrong—may be descended in the last resort from some aberrant member of what botanists playfully know as the caprifoliaceous order: and this is all the more probable because climbing and twining plants are particularly liable to degenerate in the long run into confirmed parasitism. But if so, the resemblance to the supposed primitive honeysuckle ancestor, as in the case of so many other distinguished pedigrees, is now almost obliterated. The flower retains hardly a trace of honeysuckle peculiarities: the opposite leaves and the smooth round berry, capped by the remnant of a calyx, alone suggest the

possibility of a remote cousinship with woodbine, laurustinus, and guelder-rose. And this is just as it should be, for the mistletoe is nothing if not vague and mysterious. It trades upon the occult, the abstruse, the recondite. A plant whose relationships were all as clear as mud would lack that mystic element of the dim and the incomprehensible which Mr. Herbert Spencer considers essential and fundamental to the very idea of religion.

The modern mistletoe, as we know it to-day, in its present highly evolved and degenerate state as a confirmed parasite, is no longer an enigma. It is a woody shrub, with yellowish-green leaves, which specially affects the branches of apple-trees, pears, and poplars. People who get their ideas vaguely and at second-hand from books, have a general notion, indeed, that the mistletoe's favourite haunt is the British oak: but this, I need hardly, say is a complete mistake: as I shall show hereafter, it was the very rarity of the mistletoe on oaks that gave one, when found there, its peculiar sanctity in the eyes of primitive peoples. In the purely wild condition, mistletoe grows mostly on poplars alone; in civilized and cultivated soils it extends its depredations, wherever it gets a chance, to apple orchards and pear-trees.

And this is the manner of the generation of mistletoes. The young seedlings sprout on a branch of their involuntary host, where the seed has been carried by birds in a way which I shall hereafter more fully describe, at its proper point in the life-history of the species. Instead of rooting themselves, however, like mere groundling plants, by small fibrous rootlets, they fasten by a sort of sucker-like process to the tissues of the tree on which they feed; and, penetrating its bark to the living layer just beneath, suck up elaborated sap from the veins of their victim. Thus they live at the expense of the poplar whose food they appropriate; and when many of them together infest a single tree, as one may often see in the long road-side avenues of central France, they succeed in largely strangling and choking the foliage of their unhappy host. Nevertheless, the mistletoe is not quite a parasite of the deepest dye, like our common English dodder or the felonious broomrape, which are both of them leafless, and derive their entire nutriment from the vessels of the plants on which they prey. Mistletoe still retains some relics of self-respect: it has only reached the first stage of parasitism. It keeps to this day green leaves of its own, containing the active vegetable digestive principle, chlorophyll, which manufactures starch for it under the influence of sunlight. It takes from its host elaborated

sap, rich in many prime elements of its needful food; but it does something for its own support, all the same, by supplementing them with material honestly obtained in its own wan green foliage.

Everybody knows well the look of those pale yellowish leaves, thick, stiff, and leathery, which seem to betoken in their very appearance the uncanny mode of life of the plant that bears them. But it is not everybody that knows equally well the little inconspicuous greenish flowers that precede and produce the berries—flowers of two sexes, often separately borne on distinct plants, the wee little males with no trace of petals, while the females still retain some last relic of their high estate (when they were handsome honeysuckles) in the shape of four tiny scale-like flower-leaves, so inconspicuous that one needs to look close indeed with a magnifying glass to detect their presence. Yet there they are to this day, degraded petals, to prove the fall of the mistletoe, an outward and visible sign of its long course of degeneracy. In the centre of these fertile blossoms stands a wee sticky column, the sensitive surface of the ovary: small flies and other unconsidered insect riff-raff act as go-betweens to convey the pollen from the male flowers to their spinster sisters. A few specks of honey dotted about on the cups serve to reward their labour and attract their attentions. In search of it, the flies smear themselves over with golden grains on the petalless flowers, which they rub off again unconsciously on the sticky surface of the female ovaries. This sets up fructification. As soon as the fertilising powder has quickened the embryo within, a fruit grows out apace—the familiar semi-transparent and mysterious-looking berry of our Christmas mistletoe.

Every part of this strange plant is full of oddity; and no part more so than these wonderful berries. They are white, so as to attract the eyes of friendly birds; and they are filled with a very viscid and adhesive pulp, which sticks like glue to whatever touches it. Indeed, the Latin name of the plant, *viscum*, and the French one, *gui*, both have reference to this gummy peculiarity: and the adjective *viscid* itself means literally, 'like mistletoe.' Bird-lime (called *glu* in French) is prepared from the berries. The pulp that yields it surrounds a single solitary seed, for whose sake the whole mechanism has been developed by the parent plant. And this is the object subserved in the shrub's economy by the sticky material. Mistletoe berries are much sought after by sundry fruit-eating birds, but especially by the missel-thrush, which owes both its common English name and its scientific appellation of *Turdus viscivorus* to its marked affection

for this mystic food. Now, as the bird eats the berries, it gets the seeds entangled on its feet and bill by the sticky surroundings: and then, flying away to another tree, it gets rid of them in turn by rubbing them off sideways in a fork of the branches. That happens to be the precise spot that best suits the young mistletoe as a place for sprouting in. If it fell on to the ground beneath, it would be unable to maintain itself without the aid of a host: but rubbed off on a poplar or apple-tree, where the missel-thrush most often carries it in search of more berries, it bores its way quickly into the very tissues of its victim, and begins to suck his blood gaily for its own advantage after the hereditary habit of its wicked kind.

Such is the life-cycle of the common English mistletoe in our own country. We have but one species here, the mistletoe of the Druids (about whom, more anon): but in southern Europe there is also a smaller kind, the green-berried mistletoe, which infests rather the junipers of the Mediterranean region. This still more degraded descendant of a honeysuckle ancestor has become completely parasitic in its habits, and incapable of self-support, so that its leaves are reduced to mere purposeless relics in the shape of opposite scales arranged flat on the stem; and it derives its nourishment entirely from the body of its host, instead of supplementing its robbery, like our own British plant, by some honest toil on its own account. In the forests of Germany and Italy another genus of the same family is found in abundance, by name *loranthus*—I apologise for my language: it preys for the most part upon oaks and chestnut-trees. Without being needlessly botanical—for I know how a giddy world hates the very suspicion of botany, as Sir John Cheke's age hated learning, 'not worse than toad or asp'—I may venture to add in a stage aside that anybody who wishes to see for himself the resemblance still remaining between the honeysuckle family and the mistletoes should compare the flowers and fruit of the little English moschatel, of the common elder, and of the true honeysuckles with our British mistletoe and with the Mediterranean species; and little doubt will then be left on any candid and competent mind (like yours and mine) as to the reality of the pedigree assigned to the group by modern evolutionists.

By far the most interesting point about the mistletoe, however, is the human superstitions that have gradually clustered around that wan green parasite and those glossy white berries. And the origin and true meaning of these superstitions has only quite lately been made known to the world by that acute and

learned anthropologist, Mr. J. G. Frazer, in his epoch-making work, *The Golden Bough*. Till Mr. Frazer read aright for us the fundamental ideas involved in the wide-spread mistletoe worship, that strange antique cult seemed as incomprehensible and as enigmatic as the Sphinx herself. By the light he has cast upon the whole subject of sacred trees, mistletoe-worship becomes now a simple and natural case of a very common and comprehensible primitive worship.

From a very early period men began to adore and to propitiate the spirits which, as they believed, animated and inspired the trees and shrubs whose fruits or grains formed their chief subsistence. Thus the corn-spirit was worshipped as Ceres or as Demeter; the wine-spirit as Liber, Dionysus, or Bacchus. And primitive peoples, as Mr. Frazer has shown, considered that these tree or plant spirits were actually inherent in the herbs or shrubs they caused to grow and animated. Hence it was to them a matter of great importance to worship and appease the plant-spirits, in order that in due time they might bring forth their increase. The very growth of the corn, of the vine, of the forest trees, depended, men thought, on this informing soul that stood to them as man's breath stands to man's body.

But primitive men think grossly of the soul itself as in some way material, tangible, and visible—a little copy or miniature of the frame it inhabits. Many classical pictures show us the soul as a small winged figure issuing from the mouth; and even in the mosaics in the atrium of St. Mark's at Venice, the Creator is depicted in the very act of thrusting down Adam's throat a tiny mannikin or spirit, so that 'man became a living soul.' If ideas like these survived unabashed even among tenth-century Christians, we may well be sure that far cruder and more materialistic notions of the soul existed among primitive agricultural peoples. Thus the corn-spirit was sometimes supposed to be incarnate in the last sheaf of wheat left standing at the harvest, or made up into the corn-baby or kerna-babby—a quaint straw-built god, still paraded in many an English harvest-field, and the original, as learned men have shown, of the maiden Persephone, whom even Athenian culture knew chiefly by her antique name of the Koré or girl. Sometimes, too, the corn-spirit was found embodied in fox or mouse or mole or lizard: sometimes, as the last sheaf of the harvest was cut, it took refuge in the body of the man who cut it. The bloody rites connected with this last belief do not concern us here; they may be read about at full, with many

curious details, in the graphic and learned pages of Frazer and of Mannhardt.

What has all this to do, however, with the worship of the mistletoe? Well, a moment's consideration will show that in all northern climates the trees of the forest every autumn die to all outer appearance when they shed their leaves, and are resuscitated again in the spring when their lost soul returns to them. In the familiar legend of Demeter and Persephone we see how profoundly this yearly death and resurrection of vegetation impressed early thinkers; and how implicitly they accounted for it by supposing that the soul of all dead plants went down during the winter to the nether world, the common realm of departed spirits. Even St. Paul himself uses the simile of corn to enforce the Christian doctrine of death and resurrection. But just as ghosts sometimes walk this upper earth after death, or show themselves embodied in material form as owls, or bats, or snakes, or trees, or rivers—so there is nothing surprising to early minds in the idea that the soul of the forest may embody itself in a man (like the King of the Wood at Aricia), or may assume material form as a bough or a branch, a beast or an insect.

Now, with a general philosophy of things like this fermenting in his brain, let barbaric man go out into the wild woods in winter to see a green twig of mistletoe on an otherwise bare and leafless tree—and what idea must he almost necessarily form to himself of this surprising phenomenon? Why, the idea that the twig is the incarnate soul of the tree, the living and immortal part which guards its life for it through the seeming death or long sleep of winter. And there is clear evidence in abundance that all early races did actually so regard that strange evergreen parasite. Everywhere the mistletoe was held in mystic honour, and was worshipped as the very soul of the forest trees, to which men in the hunting and early agricultural stage owed so large a boon of food and fire and shelter.

The life of the tree—the life of the wood, the grove, the forest—was thus intimately bound up, men thought in their quaint philosophy, with the life of the mistletoe. Tear it off, and another sprang up new in its place, to be the embodiment and representative of all the trees around it. 'Uno avulso, non deficit alter,' says Virgil of the 'golden bough' which Æneas plucks under the advice of the Sibyl; and any one who looks at the yellowish-green leaves of our Christmas plant will never doubt that it is indeed the golden bough in question.

Not only, however, is the mistletoe closely bound up with the life of the tree and the genius of the forest: it is closely bound up, too, with the life of the special human being who also represents the soul of the woodland. This double personification is common in ancient religions. Many mythological tales show us cases of sacred persons who can never be killed till a certain evergreen bough is plucked from a tree—a bough which contains their fate, their soul, their destiny. Thus Balder could only be hurt by a shaft of mistletoe; and thus, even in historical times, the awful priest of the grove of Aricia—'the priest who slew the slayer, And shall himself be slain'—could only be attacked after his assailant had plucked, from the sacred grove of which he was the representative and guardian, a bough of mistletoe, the soul and embodiment of the holy forest.

This case of the Arician priesthood is so very clear and conspicuous an illustration of the principles involved that Mr. Frazer has made it the text for his whole treatment of the abstruse problem of mistletoe-lore. The mysterious being—half god, half murderer—who dwelt in the grove of Nemi, and who continued into the civilised age of the Cæsars the bloody and barbarous rites of prehistoric savagery, was always by usage a runaway slave, who held his divine honours on a strange dark tenure. He could gain the priesthood only by killing his predecessor, whose soul, it was believed, thus passed direct into the conqueror's body. He bore the title of King of the Grove—Rex Nemorensis—and was thus, as it were, the human embodiment and dwelling-place of the universal tree-spirit. But he kept his soul, it would seem, for all that, in a mistletoe-bough, which was the soul of the wood, just as Meleager kept his in the half-burned brand, or the Indian prince of the story in a box or a parrot. Therefore, before the aspirant for the bloody honours of the Arician priesthood could slay the King of the Wood and reign himself in his stead, it was necessary that he should pluck this embodied soul of the grove from its native tree; after which he might lawfully attack in single combat the existing representative and embodiment of the tree-spirit. If he conquered, the soul of the forest passed into his own body; he became himself the new Rex Nemorensis; and forthwith a fresh mistletoe sprang up in sympathy, to replace the one he had plucked in his battle for the mastery.

Now, how does all this tell upon the Druidical custom, and the present Christmas use of the mistletoe? Can any traceable connection be shown to exist between the King of the Wood and

the custom of kissing pretty girls under the pale white berries? I fancy yes—and it comes about in this way.

There can be very little doubt that to the ancient Celtic nations of Britain and the Continent, the oak and the acorn were most important objects of concern and perhaps of worship. The Roman writers tell us they lived upon acorns. That seems unlikely: but it is probable that they fed to some extent upon forest produce: it is certain that at some earlier age than the historic their ancestors must have done so: and at least a sacrificial and sacramental rite of acorn-eating must in all probability have survived among them. To a people with such habits, the mistletoe, when it grew on an oak, as so rarely happens, must have represented the embodied soul of the oak-tree, the father and producer of all acorns. Hence it was naturally an object of very profound and peculiar worship—a visible god—the tree-spirit in its most important and economically useful avatar. It was, so to speak, the essence of the whole race of oaks, rolled into a single tangible twig: no wonder it was cut, as we read, with a golden knife, and reverently received into a fine linen cloth for the particular adoration of its woad-stained votaries.

But why cut it at all? Why not leave the thrice-sacred plant growing on the tree where the Druids found it? That is a hard question to answer, and one for which one can only offer conjectural explanations. But the case of the Arician priesthood would seem at least to suggest the pregnant idea that the cutting of the mistletoe was not, as our Roman informants imagined, the central point and main element of the ceremony: it was perhaps only the accompaniment of those other bloody rites of human sacrifice which we know to have formed part of the Druidical religion. If so, then possibly, when the mistletoe was cut, a human representative of the forest soul, an incarnate oak-spirit, a Celtic Rex Nemorensis, was sacrificed by his successor, himself to himself, after the strange and mystic fashion of so many antique peoples. And this is apparently the rationale of so curious a rite: in order that the human embodiment of the divine soul might not grow old and feeble, so that all trees might suffer, he was killed, as Mr. Andrew Lang phrases it, 'with all the pluck in him'; and his sanctity passed on forthwith to a younger and more vigorous representative. And so, too, perhaps the evergreen mistletoe itself was cut down, itself to itself, in order that a younger and fresher mistletoe bough might spring up in its place—in order that 'uno avulso non deficeret alter'—golden, like the last, and

equally holy and precious. Be this as it may, it is at any rate certain that in many ancient religions, where trees were sacred, the mistletoe, the visible soul of dead trees in winter, was held in very special and peculiar reverence.

And now, how has mistletoe, thus shown to owe its sanctity to the very oldest and bloodiest stratum of savage religious thought, managed to hold its own to the present day, and to get incorporated into the religion of peace itself, in connection with the great annual mid-winter festival which marks the birth of the founder of Christianity?

Well, to explain this obvious anomaly, we must remember, first of all, that Christianity in its early days made many external concessions upon minor points of detail to the fixed habits of primitive paganism. Gregory's famous advice to Augustine on his first mission to Britain—to Christianise the holy places and temples of the heathen Saxons by crosses and religious services, so that the people might still continue to worship at their accustomed shrines—was but a definite avowal of the common practice of the Church, in giving the least possible nervous shock to the ingrained religious sentiments of its catechumens. Christmas itself, for example, is fixed in a purely arbitrary way at the date of the old heathen mid-winter festival—the Yule-tide, the Saturnalia—when the sun, having reached its furthest southern limit, begins to move northward again, bringing with it fresh life, green leaves, the flowers, the spring, the summer. To all early minds, that feast of reviving vegetation had a great significance. Sun-worship, tree-worship, the cult of the corn, the vine, the oak, the wood-spirits, all made it for them into a period of the highest natural sanctity.

What more obvious, then, than that at this period of reawakening life in the vegetable world—this time when the quickening sun began his glad journey home again, to revive the dead boughs and dormant roots of the green things—the mistletoe, the symbol and soul of the forest trees, should come in for a special degree of reverence and adoration? The two great feasts of the round year, for Celt and Teuton alike, were Yule-tide and Mid-summer. The one saw the sun begin his northward course, with fresh promise of fruits and corn and warmth and light and plenty: the other saw him arrived at the fulness of his power, with that promise fulfilled in a plentiful harvest and abundance of store for the coming winter.

The Church, in its day of partial and tentative triumph, turned the heathen festival into the feast of the Nativity: but it kept it

still at the season of the winter solstice. Most of the heathen rites still survived under christianised forms—the yule-log, the mistletoe, the holly berries, the Christmas tree, the ancient saturnalia of beef and beer and pudding. Relics of sun-worship and tree-worship still peep out through it all: Christmas is even now just the pagan yule-tide, barely disguised under a thin veil of ecclesiastical sanction.

Last of all, but most important to the giddy minds of youth, why do we kiss, unreproved, under the mistletoe? For that strange but not wholly reprehensible practice various causes might no doubt be assigned. It may be merely a survival of the old saturnalian freedom, the ebullition of high spirits, junketing, and joy, due to the good things of the season, the cakes and ale, and ginger hot i' the mouth, or to delight at the sun's return from his cold southward banishment. But I fancy the rite goes a little deeper into the core of things than that; and its specially close connection with the mistletoe seems to suggest such a profounder and more mystical explanation. This, at least, is how the matter envisages itself to me, as read by the light of some instructive savage analogies.

In many primitive tribes, when the chief or king dies, there ensues a wild period of general licence, an orgy of anarchy, till a new king is chosen and consecrated in his stead to replace him. During this terrible interregnum or lordship of misrule, when every man does that which is right (or otherwise) in his own eyes, all things are lawful; or rather, there are no laws, no lawgiver, no executive. But as soon as the new chief comes to his own again, everything is changed: the community resumes at once its wonted respectability. Now, is it not probable that the mid-winter orgy is similarly due to the cutting of the mistletoe? perhaps even to the killing of the King of the Wood along with it? Till the new mistletoe grows, are not all things allowable? At any rate, I cast out this hint as a possible explanation of saturnalian freedom in general, and kissing under the mistletoe in particular. It may conceivably survive as the last faint memory of that wild orgy of licence which accompanied the rites of so many slain gods—Tammuz, Adonis, Dionysus, Attis. Much mitigated and mollified by civilisation and Christianity, we may still see in it, perhaps, some dim lineaments of the mad feasts which Herodotus describes for us over the dead gods of Egypt. So far back into the realms of savage thought does that seemingly picturesque and harmless mistletoe hurry us.

THE CANDIDATE.

SENG was forty-five years of age, and one of the most painstaking students of his time of life to be found in Peking.

For the past thirty years he had regularly entered his name in the great civil service examinations which take place throughout the empire. Hard indeed had he striven to qualify himself for the honour of official employment. But he was, alas, by nature rather dull, and year after year he was unsuccessful. For a while he never got out of the last thousand of the ten or twelve thousand candidates who aspired as he aspired.

Time went on, however, and by the help of the most untiring assiduity he began towards the middle of his life to be regarded as a promising student. If he continued to progress in the same ratio, there was yet some likelihood that ere he was fifty he might meet with his reward.

Seng was the more stimulated to persevere inasmuch as he was not at ease in his home circle. His father was dead. His mother was blind, and of an unamiable disposition. Indeed, she was more than unamiable: by some aberration of heart she began to scoff at her son, and upbraid him for his deficiency of intellect. She also behaved very badly indeed to her daughter-in-law, the student's wife.

Herein Seng appears to have shown some indiscretion. He married a girl with enchanting teeth and eyes, but next to no brains. This was a manifest contravention of the natural law which impels a dull man to seek a clever wife, and an intellectual man a mere doll of a girl for a helpmate. It would have mattered the less—even if it had not been a positive convenience—had not Madame Seng (as we will call the old lady, Seng's mother) become much incapacitated by her blindness. As it was, she desired a daughter-in-law whom she could rely upon to do everything connected with the house, from buying rice to dusting the domestic effigies, as well as to be infinitely patient and long-suffering under the abuse and even blows which she loved to bestow upon subordinates.

Seng's wife, however, was not such a girl. She suited Seng, and Seng suited her, because he was at all times fairly civil towards her. She took the greatest possible care of her teeth, and daily washed her eyes with a celebrated perfumed water

warranted to preserve their brightness. For the rest, she was content so she could avoid her mother-in-law's voice and the cane with which latterly, in her old age, the blind woman was often wont to pursue her. Vain was it for Seng, in response to his mother's complaints, to dole forth moral maxims for his wife's improvement. The copybook phrases were excellently spoken, but they fell on unfertile soil. And, moreover, when Seng perceived through his spectacles how snow-white were his spouse's pretty teeth, and with what an attractive lustre her eyes sparkled towards him, even he was, more often than not, tempted to caress when he meant to scold.

This sort of thing exasperated the mother-in-law immeasurably. Latterly she became very bitter, and would run amuck about the house with the cane in her hand, beating this way and that, and calling her daughter-in-law many opprobrious names. The girl would stand in an alcove and watch the old woman's proceedings quite calmly, and without either the wish or the thought of taunting her. But when the swish of the cane approached in her direction, she would gently step through the window of the alcove, not forgetting even to bolt it from the outside lest an accident should happen. The old woman would continue her malevolent rushes to and fro until she was exhausted. Then Seng's wife would return, and, with soothing words, try to assuage the poor blind creature's animosity against her; and when she was more than commonly exhausted, she would take her upon her knee as if she were a baby, and rock her until her strength and indignation had recovered themselves.

Such scenes as these became very common in the house. They moved poor Seng to tears more than once, and he might have been heard muttering to himself a string of precepts enjoining the duty of filial love and forbearance under all circumstances. But there can be no doubt all this agitation at home affected his chances at the examinations. His depression was something terrible when the lists had appeared, and he realised that he had gained no ground—or as good as none—during the previous twelve months.

When Seng reached the ripe age of forty his mother died. This was a sad blow to the poor man. Not that he would have been inconsolable for his mother's loss in itself: for he had schooled himself into the assurance that she had long exhausted the pleasures of existence. But, as a matter of fact, with her

vanished the means of the household support. It was an iniquitous thing. The old woman, from mere spite, had bequeathed such estate as she had to the heads of a certain Pagoda on a hill over against her house. They were to build her a fine tomb, with a south aspect, on another neighbouring hill, to keep her memory green for a period.

Never was there such a hard and extraordinary calamity. It was of a kind, too, that smote poor Seng in his tenderest part. His mother had insulted him for ever and ever. She had not had confidence in him and his regard for the sacred law which enjoins a son to do all he can for his parents, dead or alive.

Moreover, how was he to know that the same unnatural feeling which had prompted this cruel diversion of the family estate would not perpetuate itself to his detriment in the spiritual world? In other words, the awful thought came to him that his mother's ghostly part would oppose him in his literary efforts, and also do its best to make him completely miserable in all the concerns of his life.

'And this evil,' he moaned, 'is to come upon one who never failed to kow-tow night and morning at your venerable feet, O my mother!'

In the fervour of his grief the poor fellow actually forgot himself so far as to weep, with his head bent on his wife's shoulder, she tenderly stroking his brow the while, and whispering words of comfort about the forthcoming examination.

'You will become a high and mighty official,' she said. 'I wish to prophesy it.'

Hearing this, Seng braced himself, and, with the light of heroic endeavour in his eyes—poor eyes, weakened by his incessant studies—he clasped his wife to his breast, and began an eloquent oration, in which much was said about the priceless value of unwearying application and the virtues that arise in the heart after twenty years of literary exercises.

'I will forget the past. I will be young for ever until I succeed, and when these sad hours are gone, we shall look back upon them as salutary aids to that eternal contentment which shall abide with us as the result of a competence!'

Thus, urged by necessity and his own fading ambitions, Seng threw himself into the strife of the examinations with a consuming earnestness. He was never without slips in his hand, and even in his sleep he repeated his phrases without knowing it.

So enthralling grew his passion for print that if, in walking the streets, he saw upon the ground but a morsel of paper with the character upon it, he would fall into a noble passion. Having picked it up, and execrated the careless person who had cast it aside, he would then bear it reverently to the corner of the street, and, with an ejaculatory sentence from Confucius or one of the Five Ancient Classics, deposit it in the receptacle there prepared for such precious litter.

In spite of Seng's labours, however, year after year went by, with failure ever in their train. The thought of his mother, and the possibility that she was still working mischief for him, often depressed him immeasurably. But he struggled on bravely, and at length made really substantial progress in the lists. A compassionate mandarin employed him in the meantime as a sort of fifth-rate clerk. The wage was ridiculous, but Seng and his wife made it suffice. They trusted to the future to recompense them.

This brings us to Seng's forty-sixth year, which found him in Peking, and a hot favourite for the honours of the examination that was impending. The mandarin in whose service he was had entrusted him with a commission of some delicacy. He was to bribe a superior as astutely as possible for a certain purpose. It was by no means a task to our friend's taste, but he sighed and fulfilled it, so skilfully indeed that he gained the regard of the sinner; and then he turned himself to his slips and moral exercises with the zeal and sprightliness of a boy.

'It shall be this year or never,' he said to himself. He said it also to his tutor, who had great confidence in him, and who did not scruple, over innumerable cups of tea, to whisper it abroad that Piseng was as sure of a place this year as man could be.

Now Piseng was our friend's full name, but for brevity's sake he was generally known by the ordinary name of Seng. In the schools, however, he was of course entered in full, and the prefix 'Pi' gave him a certain distinction which the multitude of other candidates with names as common as our 'Smith,' 'Brown,' 'Robinson,' 'Jones,' &c., by no means enjoyed.

As the time came on for the great examinations to begin, the influx of students into the imperial city made a perceptible difference in the population of the streets. It also caused proportionate excitement among the students themselves, their kindred, and the various proprietors of the lotteries, who were now to reap their annual harvest of cash and taels from the speculative

inhabitants of the city. And this is one of the many odd features of life in the far east, as contrasted with life among ourselves.

In the south of Europe the lotteries are concerned with inanimate numbers. You invest your money on these in a series, and thus you lose it—much more often than not. With us horse-racing seems on a par with the lotteries. But the exalted Chinaman is not content with such methods of profit and loss. At the time of the great examination he backs candidates in a series, even as the Italian with a spare half-franc backs the numbers his superstition and the latest popular dream-book urge him to favour with his suffrages.

And so it happened that, as the fame of Seng's indefatigable industry and more than usually strenuous efforts at his studies became noised abroad in the parlours of professors and the back streets of Peking, the public began to fancy him as a winning card.

Great, then, was the run upon the series in which the name of Piseng appeared.

Word of this was of course soon brought to our friend, who abode with his wife in a small house in a mean part of the city.

'They shall not be disappointed,' said Seng, with ill-concealed elation. 'There are virtues of different kinds, but of these the pre-eminent ones are as follows——'

All day long he gave himself over to his labours. His wife was as anxious as he was. For the time she thought less about her lovely almond-shaped eyes and white teeth than about the issue of the dreaded examination. Indeed the result of this seemed to her almost of more consequence than the flat-browed little boy-babe which she bore upon her lap, and which had signalised the past year by coming into the world to bless her.

It was absurd that they should starve as underlings in a mandarin's household when Seng had the ability at length to become, may be, a mandarin himself.

People took to stopping Seng in the streets, and paying him wonderful compliments. They also implored him, of his infinite courtesy, to oblige them by succeeding as a candidate. They were interested in his success or failure to the extent of—an indefinite number of taels.

This was of course exceedingly pleasant from one point of view. It was the kind of thing that could not fail to encourage a sanguine student. But, on the other hand, though at first Seng took it as a high honour, and would blush when his virtues and

application were so elaborately extolled to his face, by and by he began to feel that there was a responsibility about his position which affected his nerves.

'It is dreadful, my peacock eye,' he said to his wife one day when he felt very tenderly towards her, 'it is dreadful to understand that upon my own unaided achievements depends the happiness or the disappointment of so many of my fellow-creatures.'

'But why need it be? Is it not their own affair? You do not ask them to believe you are so sure of a place,' urged the girl.

'No, I do not. But you perceive it is the same thing, do you not? or you would if your intelligence were of the masculine order. And is it not written in the fifth section of the third chapter of the eight-and-twentieth volume of the great master that—that; but upon the whole I need not perplex my mind with the memory of unnecessary learning. It is rare indeed that this part of the great master's collected writings are made use of in the schools.'

'I cannot see that you are to blame in any way!'

'Nor are you asked to interest yourself so deeply in what is, perchance, beyond you. Behold the beginning and the end for which thou wast created!'

With these words Seng pointed to the child of which he was the father. There was no answering so forcible a rejoinder.

In his heart our friend was, however, in very much doubt after all as to his ability to win for his unknown friends the money they had invested upon him. He felt that his learning was of a halt and lame kind, and he knew only too well that unless the conditions were all in his favour he should not show at his best. With advancing years certain bodily distresses had come upon him. That leaden dragon, indigestion, in particular, harassed him, and tied up the mouth of his wallet of memory only too often.

'I pray that I may succeed, but I cannot tell. I cannot tell. As a person of priceless wisdom said in the reign of—in the reign of—. It was during the Ming dynasty, but I cannot recollect the venerable individual's name, nor his exact words, though I have a diamond-clear sense of their significance.'

So the days crept on until it was the eve of the opening of the great competition. Peking palpitated with the sound of repeated phrases, and with the throbbing of the hearts of the thousands of expectant students.

Seng was washing his face preparatory to eating his frugal supper when a visitor of distinction was announced. Countless

were the obeisances the visitor's servant offered to Seng, and Seng requited them to the visitor himself.

The latter then expressed his wish to see our friend by himself, and to say something for his private ear. It was easily arranged. And immediately, without preamble, the visitor stated that he had come to do his utmost to induce Seng to withdraw from the examination.

'I am able, most learned sir, to propose to you the sum of ten thousand taels as a compensation for your obliging sacrifice.'

'Ten thousand taels!' exclaimed Seng, with natural surprise.

'It is true. I need not disguise it from a person of your perspicacity. The public have backed you—pardon the unscholarly phrase, I entreat—have backed you to such an extent that rather than pay up your series, most respected Piseng, we will endow you with this stupendous sum. You do not surely think it too little, by the side of the beggarly five hundred taels of income which may be the reward of your intellect-breaking success.'

'Oh no,' said Seng. 'It is indeed a great deal of money, but——'

'And by no means a dishonest proposal, most virtuous sir, to whom all the injunctions of our most sapient and excellent ancestors are as familiar as your wife's face, if I may be pardoned for mentioning it for the sake of the simile.'

'It is not *very* honest,' demurred the perplexed Seng; 'but still I have heard of more unpardonable deeds.'

'Infinitely more unpardonable deeds are daily committed in the kingdom, and not so much as one house-fly says "you are to blame" to the persons who are guilty of them. But how far removed from the borderland of guilt is the action I am empowered to suggest to you, oh long-suffering sir? You are to sacrifice yourself, Piseng, for the good of others. Instead of reaping honour and a certain position (much over-estimated though this assuredly is), you bow your head to some destitute youth who is your inferior in mind-power, and you say to him, with a heart overcrowded with generosity: "Take, my brother, the reward that would have been mine. I give it freely to you, and retire into private life to enjoy the fruits of my life-long acquaintance with virtue and noble sentences."'

'The ten thousand taels will be in cash, I presume, not in land?' asked Seng, hesitantly, and with a hurried look round about him.

'In the most undoubted of papers, great sir. They shall be turned into silver, if so it please you. Then your self-renunciatory mind has decided?'

Seng thought earnestly for a minute. By accepting this proposal he would be saved anxiety for the rest of his life. Even as an official there would be no end, but death, to the harassments and future examinations before him. Then there was his child, so pink and white, and likely to have a large appetite.

'I will receive the ten thousand taels,' said Seng, 'and having them, I will quit Peking at once. It shall suffice for me henceforward that I pursue the three happinesses of long life, wealth, and a family of sons. My constitution, though impaired, may yet suffice for the first and last of these desirable ends. As for the wealth, your esteemed consideration and my own self-sacrifice in the present matter may serve as a stepping-stone to it. I have said.'

'Most discreet Piseng,' was the other's reply, and after a few more words he withdrew, promising that the money should be sent that same night.

In effect it was sent, and received, and the following morning, instead of sitting down to a tiresome desk, our friend, with his wife and child, and the money in portable form, set out for Canton, where he proposed to begin a new life devoted to commerce instead of official honour.

This desertion of literature for commerce was a sad drop in the world for our poor friend. As a student of the character, and a disciple of the great Confucius and Mencius, he was an aristocrat of the Flowery Land, though poor as a harbour coolie or a chair porter. But in taking to trade he degraded himself below the unlettered worker in the fields. The worst of it was that he ascribed this perversion of his better nature, not to his own unrighteous and lazy instincts, but to his mother's untiring and discontented spirit.

He proposed, however, to assuage the ghost's malignancy by paying a nice little sum to one of the most learned doctors of Feng-Shin (or ghost lore) in the country. If it were necessary to move the old lady's bones, even that also should be done, though the cost might be great.

It need hardly be added that the backers of the Piseng series in the examinations were exceedingly wroth with Seng. But they had no redress.

MUD.

Even a prejudiced observer will readily admit that the most valuable mineral on earth is mud. Diamonds and rubies are just nowhere by comparison. I don't mean weight for weight, of course—mud is 'cheap as dirt,' to buy in small quantities—but aggregate for aggregate. Quite literally, and without hocus-pocus of any sort, the money valuation of the mud in the world must outnumber many thousand times the money valuation of all the other minerals put together. Only we reckon it usually not by the ton, but by the acre, though the acre is worth most where the mud lies deepest. Nay, more, the world's wealth is wholly based on mud. Corn, not gold, is the true standard of value. Without mud there would be no human life, no productions of any kind: for food stuffs of every description are raised on mud; and where no mud exists, or can be made to exist, there, we say, there is desert or sand-waste. Land, without mud, has no economic value. To put it briefly, the only parts of the world that count much for human habitation are the mud deposits of the great rivers, and notably of the Nile, the Euphrates, the Ganges, the Indus, the Irrawaddy, the Hoang Ho, the Yang-tze-Kiang; of the Po, the Rhone, the Danube, the Rhine, the Volga, the Dnieper; of the St. Lawrence, the Mississippi, the Missouri, the Orinoco, the Amazons, the La Plata. A corn field is just a big mass of mud; and the deeper and purer and freer from stones or other impurities it is the better.

But England, you say, is not a great river mud-field; yet it supports the densest population in the world. True; but England is an exceptional product of modern civilisation. She can't feed herself: she is fed from Odessa, Alexandria, Bombay, New York, Montreal, Buenos Ayres—in other words, from the mud fields of the Russian, the Egyptian, the Indian, the American, the Canadian, the Argentine rivers. Orontes, said Juvenal, has flowed into Tiber; Nile, we may say nowadays, with equal truth, has flowed into Thames.

There is nothing to make one realise the importance of mud, indeed, like a journey up Nile when the inundation is just over. You lounge on the deck of your dahabieh, and drink in geography almost without knowing it. The voyage forms a perfect introduc-

tion to the study of mudology, and suggests to the observant mind (meaning you and me) the real nature of mud as nothing else on earth that I know of can suggest it. For in Egypt you get your phenomenon isolated, as it were, from all disturbing elements. You have no rainfall to bother you, no local streams, no complex denudation: the Nile does all, and the Nile does everything. On either hand stretches away the bare desert, rising up in grey rocky hills. Down the midst runs the one long line of alluvial soil—in other words, Nile mud—which alone allows cultivation and life in that rainless district. The country bases itself absolutely on mud. The crops are raised on it; the houses and villages are built of it; the land is manured with it; the very air is full of it. The crude brick buildings that dissolve in dust are Nile mud solidified; the red pottery of Assiout is Nile mud baked hard; the village mosques and minarets are Nile mud whitewashed. I have even seen a ship's bulwarks neatly repaired with mud. It pervades the whole land, when wet, as mud undisguised; when dry, as dust-storm.

Egypt, says Herodotus, is a gift of the Nile. A truer or more pregnant word was never spoken. Of course it is just equally true, in a way, that Bengal is a gift of the Ganges, and that Louisiana and Arkansas are a gift of the Mississippi; but with this difference, that in the case of the Nile the dependence is far more obvious, far freer from disturbing or distracting details. For that reason, and also because the Nile is so much more familiar to most English-speaking folk than the American rivers, I choose Egypt first as my type of a regular mud-land. But in order to understand it fully you mustn't stop all your time in Cairo and the Delta; you mustn't view it only from the terrace of Shepheard's Hotel or the rocky platform of the Great Pyramid at Ghizeh: you must push up country early, under Mr. Cook's care, to Luxor and the First Cataract. It is up-country that Egypt unrolls itself visibly before your eyes in the very process of making: it is there that the full importance of good, rich black mud first forces itself upon you by undeniable evidence.

For remember that, from a point above Berber to the sea, the dwindling Nile never receives a single tributary, a single drop of fresh water. For more than fifteen hundred miles the ever-lessening river rolls on between bare desert hills and spreads fertility over the deep valley in their midst—just as far as its own mud sheet can cover the barren rocky bottom, and no farther.

For the most part the line of demarcation between the grey bare desert and the cultivable plain is as clear and as well-defined as the margin of sea and land: you can stand with one foot on the barren rock and one on the green soil of the tilled and irrigated mud-land. For the water rises up to a certain level, and to that level accordingly it distributes both mud and moisture: above it comes the arid rock, as destitute of life, as dead and bare and lonely as the centre of Sahara. In and out, in waving line, up to the base of the hills, cultivation and greenery follow, with absolute accuracy, the line of highest flood-level; beyond it the hot rock stretches dreary and desolate. Here and there islands of sandstone stand out above the green sea of doura or cotton; here and there a bay of fertility runs away up some lateral valley, following the course of the mud; but one inch above the inundation-mark vegetation and life stop short all at once with absolute abruptness. In Egypt, then, more than anywhere else, one sees with one's own eyes that mud and moisture are the very conditions of mundane fertility.

Beyond Cairo, as one descends seaward, the mud begins to open out fan-wise and form a delta. The narrow mountain ranges no longer hem it in. It has room to expand and spread itself freely over the surrounding country, won by degrees from the Mediterranean. At the mouths the mud pours out into the sea and forms fresh deposits constantly on the bottom, which are gradually silting up still newer lands to seaward. Slow as is the progress of this land-forming action, there can be no doubt that the Nile has the intention of filling up by degrees the whole eastern Mediterranean, and that in process of time—say in no more than a few million years or so, a mere bagatelle to the geologist—with the aid of the Po and some other lesser streams, it will transform the entire basin of the inland sea into a level and cultivable plain, like Bengal or Mesopotamia, themselves (as we shall see) the final result of just such silting action.

It is so very important, for those who wish to see things 'as clear as mud,' to understand this prime principle of the formation of mud-lands, that I shall make no apology for insisting on it further in some little detail; for when one comes to look the matter plainly in the face, one can see in a minute that almost all the big things in human history have been entirely dependent upon the mud of the great rivers. Thebes and Memphis, Rameses and Amenhotep, based their civilisation absolutely upon the mud of

Nile. The bricks of Babylon were moulded of Euphrates mud; the greatness of Nineveh reposed on the silt of the Tigris. Upper India is the Indus; Agra and Delhi are Ganges and Jumna mud; China is the Hoang Ho and the Yang-tse-Kiang; Burmah is the paddy field of the Irrawaddy delta. And so many great plains in either hemisphere consist really of nothing else but mud-banks of almost incredible extent, filling up prehistoric Baltics and Mediterraneans, that a glance at the probable course of future evolution in this respect may help us to understand and to realise more fully the gigantic scale of some past accumulations.

As a preliminary canter I shall trot out first the valley of the Po, the existing mud flat best known by personal experience to the feet and eyes of the tweed-clad English tourist. Everybody who has looked down upon the wide Lombard plain from the pinnacled roof of Milan Cathedral, or who has passed by rail through that monotonous level of poplars and vines between Verona and Venice, knows well what a mud flat due to inundation and gradual silting up of a valley looks like. What I want to do now is to inquire into its origin, and to follow up in fancy the same process, still in action, till it has filled the Adriatic from end to end with one great cultivable lowland.

Once upon a time (I like to be at least as precise as a fairy tale in the matter of dates) there was no Lombardy. And that time was not, geologically speaking, so very remote; for the whole valley of the Po, from Turin to the sea, consists entirely of alluvial deposits—or, in other words, of Alpine mud—which has all accumulated where it now lies at a fairly recent period. We know it is recent, because no part of Italy has ever been submerged since it began to gather there. To put it more definitely, the entire mass has almost certainly been laid down since the first appearance of man on our earth: the earliest human beings who reached the Alps or the Apennines—black savages clad in skins of extinct wild beasts—must have looked down from their slopes, with shaded eyes, not on a level plain such as we see to-day, but on a great arm of the sea which stretched like a gulf far up towards the base of the hills about Turin and Rivoli. Of this ancient sea the Adriatic forms the still unsilted portion. In other words, the great gulf which now stops short at Trieste and Venice once washed the foot of the Alps and the Apennines to the Superga at Turin, covering the sites of Padua, Ferrara, Bologna, Ravenna, Mantua, Cremona, Modena, Parma, Piacenza, Pavia,

Milan, and Novara. The industrious reader who gets out his Baedeker and looks up the shaded map of North Italy which forms its frontispiece will be rewarded for his pains by a better comprehension of the district thus demarcated. The idle must be content to take my word for what follows. I pledge them my honour that I'll do my best not to deceive their trustful innocence.

It may sound at first hearing a strange thing to say so, but the whole of that vast gulf, from Turin to Venice, has been entirely filled up within the human period by the mud sheet brought down by mountain torrents from the Alps and the Apennines.

A parallel elsewhere will make this easier of belief. You have looked down, no doubt, from the garden of the hotel at Glion upon the Lake of Geneva and the valley of the Rhone about Villeneuve and Aigle. If so, you can understand from personal knowledge the first great stage in the mud-filling process; for you must have observed for yourself from that commanding height that the lake once extended a great deal farther up country towards Bex and St. Maurice than it does at present. You can still trace at once on either side the old mountainous banks, descending into the plain as abruptly and unmistakably as they still descend to the water's edge at Montreux and Vevey. But the silt of the Rhone, brought down in great sheets of glacier mud (about which more anon) from the Furca and the Jungfrau and the Monte Rosa chain, has completely filled in the upper nine miles of the old lake basin with a level mass of fertile alluvium. There is no doubt about the fact: you can see it for yourself with half an eye from that specular mount (to give the Devil his due, I quote Milton's Satan): the mud lies even from bank to bank, raised only a few inches above the level of the lake, and as lacustrine in effect as the veriest geologist on earth could wish it. Indeed, the process of filling up still continues unabated at the present day where the mud-laden Rhone enters the lake at Bouveret, to leave it again, clear and blue and beautiful, under the bridge at Geneva. The little delta which the river forms at its mouth shows the fresh mud in sheets gathering thick upon the bottom. Every day this new mud-bank pushes out farther and farther into the water, so that in process of time the whole basin will be filled in, and a level plain, like that which now spreads from Bex and Aigle to Villeneuve, will occupy the entire bed from Montreux to Geneva.

Turn mentally to the upper feeders of the Po itself, and you find the same causes equally in action. You have stopped at

Pallanza—Garoni's is so comfortable. Well, then, you know how every Alpine stream, as it flows, full-gorged, into the Italian lakes, is busily engaged in filling them up as fast as ever it can with turbid mud from the uplands. The basins of Maggiore, Como, Lugano, and Garda are by origin deep hollows scooped out long since during the Great Ice Age by the pressure of huge glaciers that then spread far down into what is now the poplar-clad plain of Lombardy. But ever since the ice cleared away, and the torrents began to rush headlong down the deep gorges of the Val Leventina and the Val Maggia, the mud has been hard at work, doing its level best to fill those great ice-worn bowls up again. Near the mouth of each main stream it has already succeeded in spreading a fan-shaped delta. I will not insult you by asking you at the present time of day whether you have been over the St. Gothard. In this age of *trains de luxe* I know to my cost everybody has been everywhere. No chance of pretending to superior knowledge about Japan or Honolulu: the tourist knows them. Very well, then; you must remember as you go past Bellinzona—revolutionary little Bellinzona with its three castled crags—you look down upon a vast mud flat by the mouth of the Ticino. Part of this mud flat is already solid land, but part is mere marsh or shifting quicksand. That is the first stage in the abolition of the lakes: the mud is annihilating them.

Maggiore, indeed, least fortunate of the three main sheets, is being attacked by the insidious foe at three points simultaneously. At the upper end, the Ticino, that furious radical river, has filled in a large arm, which once spread far away up the valley towards Bellinzona. A little lower down, the Maggia near Locarno carries in a fresh contribution of mud, which forms another fan-shaped delta, and stretches its ugly mass half across the lake, compelling the steamers to make a considerable détour eastward. This delta is rapidly extending into the open water, and will in time fill in the whole remaining space from bank to bank, cutting off the upper end of the lake about Locarno from the main basin by a partition of lowland. This upper end will then form a separate minor lake, and the Ticino will flow out of it across the intervening mud flat into the new and smaller Maggiore of our great-great-grandchildren. If you doubt it, look what the torrent of the Toce, the third assailing battalion of the persistent mud force, has already done in the neighbourhood of Pallanza. It has entirely cut off the upper end of the bay, that turns westward towards the

Simplon, by a partition of mud; and this isolated upper bit forms now in our own day a separate lake, the Lago di Mergozzo, divided from the main sheet by an uninteresting mud bank. In process of time, no doubt, the whole of Maggiore will be similarly filled in by the advancing mud sheet, and will become a level alluvial plain, surrounded by mountains, and greatly admired by the astute Piedmontese cultivator.

What is going on in Maggiore is going on equally in all the other sub-Alpine lakes of the Po valley. They are being gradually filled in, every one of them, by the aggressive mud sheet. The upper end of Lugano, for example, has already been cut off, as the Lago del Piano, from the main body; and the *piano* itself, from which the little isolated tarn takes its name, is the alluvial mud flat of a lateral torrent—the mud flat, in fact, which the railway from Porlezza traverses for twenty minutes before it begins its steep and picturesque climb by successive zigzags over the mountains to Menaggio. Similarly the influx of the Adda at the upper end of Como has cut off the Lago di Mezzola from the main lake, and has formed the alluvial level that stretches so drearily all around Colico. Slowly the mud fiend encroaches everywhere on the lakes; and if you look for him when you go there you can see him actually at work every spring under your very eyes, piling up fresh banks and deltas with alarming industry, and preparing (in a few hundred thousand years) to ruin the tourist trade of Cadenabbia and Bellagio.

If we turn from the lakes themselves to the Lombard plain at large, which is an immensely older and larger basin, we see traces of the same action on a vastly greater scale. A glance at the map will show the intelligent and ever courteous reader that the 'wandering Po'—I drop into poetry after Goldsmith—flows much nearer the foot of the Apennines than of the Alps in the course of its divagations, and seems purposely to bend away from the greater range of mountains. Why is this, since everything in nature must needs have a reason? Well, it is because, when the mud first began to accumulate in the old Lombard bay of the Adriatic, there was no Po at all, whether wandering or otherwise: the big river has slowly grown up in time by the union of the lateral torrents that pour down from either side, as the growth of the mud flat brought them gradually together. Careful study of a good map will show how this has happened, especially if it has the plains and mountains distinctively tinted after the excellent

German fashion. The Ticino, the Adda, the Mincio, if you look at them close, reveal themselves as tributaries of the Po, which once flowed separately into the Lombard bay; the Adige, the Piave, the Tagliamento, farther along the coast, reveal themselves equally as tributaries of the future Po, when once the great river shall have filled up with its mud the space between Trieste and Venice, though for the moment they empty themselves and their store of detritus into the open Adriatic.

Fix your eyes for a moment on Venetia proper, and you will see how this has all happened and is still happening. Each mountain torrent that leaps from the Tyrolese Alps brings down in its lap a rich mass of mud, which has gradually spread over a strip of sea some forty or fifty miles wide, from the base of the mountains to the modern coast-line of the province. Near the sea—or, in other words, at the temporary outlet—it forms banks and lagoons, of which those about Venice are the best known to tourists, though the least characteristic. For miles and miles between Venice and Trieste the shifting north shore of the Adriatic consists of nothing but such accumulating mud banks. Year after year they push farther seaward, and year after year fresh islets and shoals grow out into the waves beyond the temporary deltas. In time, therefore, the gathering mud banks of these Alpine torrents must join the greater mud bank that runs rapidly seaward at the delta of the Po. As soon as they do so the rivers must rush together, and what was once an independent stream, emptying itself into the Adriatic, must become a tributary of the Po, helping to swell the waters of that great united river. The Adige has now just reached this state: its delta is continuous with the delta of the Po, and their branches interosculate. The Mincio and the Adda reached it ages since: the Piave and the Livenia will not reach it for ages. In Roman days Hatria was still on the sea: it is now some fifteen miles inland.

From all this you can gather why the existing Po flows far from the Alps and nearer the base of the Apennines. The Alpine streams in far distant days brought down relatively large floods of glacial mud; formed relatively large deltas in the old Lombard bay; filled up with relative rapidity their larger half of the basin. The Apennines, less lofty, and free from glaciers, sent down shorter and smaller torrents, laden with far less mud, and capable therefore of doing but little alluvial work for the filling in of the future Lombardy. So the river was pushed southward by the Alpine

deposits of the northern streams, leaving the great plains of Cisalpine Gaul spread away to the north of it.

And this land-making action is ceaseless and continuous. About Venice, Chioggia, Maestra, Comacchio, the delta of the Po is still spreading seaward. In the course of ages—if nothing unforeseen occurs meanwhile to prevent it—the Alpine mud will have filled in the entire Adriatic; and the Ionian Isles will spring like isolated mountain ridges from the Adriatic plain, as the Euganean hills—those 'mountains Euganean' where Shelley 'stood listening to the pæan with which the legioned rocks did hail the sun's uprise majestical'—spring in our own time from the dead level of Lombardy. Once they in turn were the Euganean islands, and even now to the trained eye of the historical observer they stand up island-like from the vast green plain that spreads flat around them.

Perhaps it seems to you a rather large order to be asked to believe that Lombardy and Venetia are nothing more than an outspread sheet of deep Alpine mud. Well, there is nothing so good for incredulity, don't you know, as capping the climax. If a man will not swallow an inch of fact the best remedy is to make him gulp down an ell of it. And, indeed, the Lombard plain is but an insignificant mud flat compared with the vast alluvial plains of Asiatic and American rivers. The alluvium of the Euphrates, of the Mississippi, of the Hoang Ho, of the Amazons would take in many Lombardies and half a dozen Venetias without noticing the addition. But I will insist upon only one example—the rivers of India, which have formed the gigantic deep mud-flat of the Ganges and the Jumna, one of the very biggest on earth, and that because the Himalayas are the highest and newest mountain chain exposed to denudation. For, as we saw foreshadowed in the case of the Alps and Apennines, the bigger the mountains on which we can draw the greater the resulting mass of alluvium. The Rocky Mountains give rise to the Missouri (which is the real Mississippi); the Andes give rise to the Amazons and the La Plata; the Himalayas give rise to the Ganges and the Indus. Great mountain, great river, great resulting mud sheet.

At a very remote period, so long ago that we cannot reduce it to any common measure with our modern chronology, the southern table-land of India—the Deccan, as we call it—formed a great island like Australia, separated from the continent of Asia by a

broad arm of the sea which occupied what is now the great plain of Bengal, the North-West, and the Punjaub. This ancient sea washed the foot of the Himalayas, and spread south thence for 600 miles to the base of the Vindhyas. But the Himalayas are high and clad with gigantic glaciers. Much ice grinds much mud on those snow-capped summits. The rivers that flowed from the Roof of the World carried down vast sheets of alluvium, which formed fans at their mouths, like the cones still deposited on a far smaller scale in the Lake of Geneva by little lateral torrents. Gradually the silt thus brought down accumulated on either side, till the rivers ran together into two great systems—one westward, the Indus, with its four great tributaries, Jhelum, Chenab, Ravee, Sutlej; one eastward, the Ganges, reinforced lower down by the sister streams of the Jumna and the Brahmapootra. The colossal accumulation of silt thus produced filled up at last all the great arm of the sea between the two mountain chains, and joined the Deccan by slow degrees to the continent of Asia. It is still engaged in filling up the Bay of Bengal on one side by the detritus of the Ganges, and the Arabian Sea on the other by the sand-banks of the Indus.

In the same way, no doubt, the silt of the Thames, the Humber, the Rhine, and the Meuse tend slowly (bar accidents) to fill up the North Sea, and anticipate Sir Edward Watkin by throwing a land bridge across the English Channel. If ever that should happen, then history will have repeated itself, for it is just so that the Deccan was joined to the mainland of Asia.

One question more. Whence comes the mud? The answer is, Mainly from the detritus of the mountains. There it has two origins. Part of it is glacial, part of it is leaf-mould. In order to feel we have really got to the very bottom of the mud problem—and we are nothing if not thorough—we must examine in brief these two separate origins.

The glacier mud is of a very simple nature. It is disintegrated rock, worn small by the enormous millstone of ice that rolls slowly over the bed, and deposited in part as 'terminal moraine' near the summer melting-point. It is the quantity of mud thus produced, and borne down by mountain torrents, that makes the alluvial plains collect so quickly at their base. The mud flats of the world are in large part the wear and tear of the eternal hills under the planing action of the eternal glaciers.

But let us be just to our friends. A large part is also due to

the industrious earth-worm, whose place in nature Darwin first taught us to estimate at its proper worth. For there is much detritus and much first-rate soil even on hills not covered by glaciers. Some of this takes its origin, it is true, from disintegration by wind or rain, but much more is caused by the earth-worm in person. That friend of humanity, so little recognised in his true light, has a habit of drawing down leaves into his subterranean nest, and there eating them up, so as to convert their remains into vegetable mould in the form of worm-casts. This mould, the most precious of soils, gets dissolved again by the rain, and carried off in solution by the streams to the sea or the lowlands, where it helps to form the future cultivable area. At the same time the earth-worms secrete an acid, which acts upon the bare surface of rock beneath, and helps to disintegrate it in preparation for plant life in unfavourable places. It is probable that we owe almost more on the whole to these unknown but conscientious and industrious annelids than even to those 'mills of God' the glaciers, of which the American poet justly observes that though they grind slowly, yet they grind exceeding small.

In the last resort, then, it is mainly on mud that the life of humanity in all countries bases itself. Every great plain is the alluvial deposit of a great river, ultimately derived from a great mountain chain. The substance consists as a rule of the débris of torrents, which is often infertile, owing to its stoniness and its purely mineral character; but wherever it has lain long enough to be covered by earth-worms with a deep black layer of vegetable mould, there the resulting soil shows the surprising fruitfulness one gets (for example) in Lombardy, where twelve crops a year are sometimes taken from the meadows. Everywhere and always the amount and depth of the mud is the measure of possible fertility; and even where, as in the Great American Desert, want of water converts alluvial plains into arid stretches of sand-waste, the wilderness can be made to blossom like a rose in a very few years by artificial irrigation. The diversion of the Arkansas River has spread plenty over a vast sage scrub: the finest crops in the world are now raised over a tract of country which was once the terror of the traveller across the wild west of America.

A GLIMPSE OF ASIA MINOR.

THE rugged coast of Asia Minor which borders the blue Sea of Marmora suggests an infinity of fascinating ideas to the traveller who longs for some truer picture of Asiatic life than that presented by the hybrid Orientalism of Constantinople. The lovely city of Broussa, the earliest capital of the Turkish Sultans, still continues to be a perfect type of the unchanged and unchanging East. This may in a great measure be due to its fallen fortunes, as well as to a position of comparative isolation from the beaten track of the aggressive Frank.

The tiny steamer ploughs its way across the tranquil Marmora, which resembles a mirror of deep blue glass, motionless as the azure heaven reflected in its transparent depths. A merry but motley company of Greeks, Armenians, and French is varied by stolid-looking Turks engrossed in their hubble-bubbles, and a sprinkling of gaily-clad Asiatics in boldly-contrasted robes of scarlet, orange, and green. Even the little port of Moudanieh, which forms the entrance to the enchanted region of fancy, soon to be translated into fact, offers an attractive surprise to eyes unfamiliar with Asiatic life *pur et simple*. White-veiled women and turbaned men, girt with brilliant Persian shawls, surround the dilapidated wooden quay; but only a hasty glimpse of kaleidoscopic colouring can be obtained, a general stampede being required without delay to obtain carriages from the little khan for the drive to Broussa. With much cracking of whips, jingling of bells, and mysterious exclamations in an unknown tongue, the cavalcade sets off. Choking clouds of dust rise beneath the blazing sun of an atmosphere already several degrees hotter than that of sea-girt Constantinople. The broad road, bordered by silvery olives, and vineyards in full autumnal beauty, ascends steep brown hills, every turn showing enchanting glimpses of sapphire sea. After many miles of hot and weary work for the willing little Turkish horses, we halt in the shadow of some giant oaks which overhang a bubbling spring, their great green branches just touched with autumnal gold. A little wooden booth looks cool and pretty, with boughs of ripe lemons and glasses of rosy syrups, presided over by two solemn Asiatics, who drive a good

trade with the dust-choked and thirsty travellers. As the afternoon shadows lengthen, the white domes and black cypresses of Broussa appear through the crystalline air as if but a stone's throw beyond us, though in reality several miles away. A nearer approach discloses the full beauty of the situation: the city nestling under the mighty shadow of the Bithynian Mount Olympus, which towers up in the immediate background, the blue heights soaring into the brightening gold of the sunset sky. Brigands lurk in the dark ravines which cleave the flanks of the mountain with sharply-cut hollows of violet shadow, and this fact deepens the mental impression of awe conveyed by the solemn peaks. Bubbling fountains and brawling brooks begin to make music on every side, for Broussa is a true city of waters. The foaming cascades and swift rivers which dash from Olympus not only turn mills and spout upwards from street fountains, but each little lemon-booth and fruit-stall improvises a tiny fountain of its own from a neighbouring spring, to increase the attractions of luscious grapes and juicy lemons in a thirsty land. Even the Turkish soldiers have done the same for their sentry-boxes along the dusty highway, and jets of sparkling water dart upward, reflecting prismatic colours in the transparent atmosphere. Across an old stone bridge which spans a tumbling torrent we clatter into the steep street which leads from the city gate—the battlemented walls and crumbling towers climb the lower slopes of the Olympus, and terminate in an old Turkish fort surmounting a cliff bristling with aloe and cactus. A picturesque medley of domes, minarets, cypresses, and flat-roofed houses lies before us. Above a green thicket of fig-trees rise the twenty white cupolas of the great mosque 'Ilu Djami,' looking in the sunset glow like rainbow-tinted bubbles blown into the air. Crowds of people are returning from the bazaar to the country villages. Donkeys with green amulets round their necks, and gay trappings of blue beads plaited with string, are ridden astride by white-veiled women wearing wide blue trousers. The panniers, now emptied of their loads of fruit and vegetables, are full of brown children in gay attire; while patriarchial figures in brilliant colouring lead the way with staff in hand. Here a string of camels sails past with ill-tempered groans and grunts, making occasional vicious plunges at a tiny boy in an orange tunic, who tries to keep the long line in place. Children in pink, yellow, and purple play in the streets; men with jackets and turbans stiff with gold and silver

embroidery, or with flowing robes of many colours, smoke or grind coffee at every corner; dignified Jews, in fur-lined gaberdines, stroll up and down; women in tinsel-covered veils, with shining coins wound in hair and bodice, throw back the shutters of the low white houses to admit the evening breeze. The orange sunset heightens the brilliancy and deepens the tints of the wonderful *coup-d'œil* presented by each arcaded street. It resembles some magic vision of Arabian Nights rather than a reality of the present century; and the dreamlike impression is intensified as the broad sun sinks below the horizon, and the sudden darkness of the South falls upon the scene. The little inn, gay with Oriental rugs and divans, and sweet with pungent grass matting, makes a pretty picture, with its coloured lamps gleaming through the night, their rosy light falling upon hangings and prayer-carpets of lovely blended hues. The courtyard is full of fountains, which make pleasant lounging-places in the starlit evening; for doors and gates are bolted and barred at sunset, and Broussa, in true Oriental fashion, is wrapped in absolute darkness —the stillness of the streets only broken by the barking of dogs and the occasional footfall of some mysterious figure carrying a tiny lantern, with which he carefully picks his way across the numerous snares and pitfalls of Asiatic pavements.

The celebrated mosques containing the tombs of the early sultans are our first destination in the morning. They are large and elaborately decorated, but lack the grand simplicity by which the ideal mosque is rendered impressive. The turquoise-tinted tiles of the Green Mosque, the shields and banners of Osman's tomb, and the gaudy interior of 'Ilu Djami' produce a somewhat tawdry and theatrical effect. The details are too insistent, and not sufficiently merged in that unity of design which, in the best specimens of Mahometan architecture, forcibly conveys the prevailing Moslem idea of the Divine unity. An air of desolation and desertion surrounds mosque and tomb. Mahometanism in Broussa has evidently cooled down from the white-heat to which it burns in the modern Turkish capital, where devotion is deep in proportion to its narrowness. Perhaps the stimulus of opposing creeds, which acts as the sharp spur to fanaticism, is unfelt in a city which has ceased to be a centre of either ecclesiastical or secular interests. Very few worshippers are to be seen; here and there a dervish and his disciples sit on their prayer-carpets rocking to and fro, and chanting in the comical nasal twang which appears to be the ap-

proved tone of Oriental worship. They are not too much absorbed in prayer for a pause and a good gossip at the entrance of strangers; and when the cradle-like shoes provided for infidel feet slip off unobserved by the wearer, who returns for them in terrified haste on discovering their loss, the chant of the neophytes relapses into an unmistakable giggle. Exquisite tiling of softest colour adorns dome and tomb; each tomb surmounted by the turban and sword of the sultan who sleeps below. Green banners, bearing the sacred device of the silver crescent, droop in heavy folds from the roof, and shields with inscriptions from the Koran surround each building. The mosques are so identical in character that interest soon flags, monotony being the keynote of the faith of Islam. The cry of the turbaned muezzin from minaret to minaret, as we emerge into the sunny street, seems to echo every phase of the Moslem creed, as one turns impatiently from a deism so remote from human sympathies, and so destitute of connecting links between earth and heaven.

Fortunately for the unappreciative Frankish mind, the interests of Broussa are not restricted to its mosques. The beautiful bazaar is one of the most characteristic features of the city, and far surpasses that of Constantinople in local colour and undiluted Orientalism. The dim arcades and shadowy domes of the huge building which contains street after street of varied merchandise, shelter us from the burning sun. We join a dazzling, many-coloured crowd of veiled women, turbaned men, and fantastically-clad children; while donkeys, mules, and camels mingle with the throng, and add their quota to the pandemonium of noise which echoes through the dusky corridors. Here a solemn Turk sits cross-legged on a stall gay with radiant silks, and gauzes which seem woven of moonshine and mist. The dark gallery behind him glows with the crimson and purple of the long sashes and streamers which wave from the roof of the silk-bazaar. He smokes a peaceful narghileh, and sips coffee from a jewelled cup, exhibiting his treasures with a wave of the arm, but not condescending to speak. A youthful Asiatic, in gold-embroidered jacket and gorgeous shawl, presides over stores of Turkish delight, rose-leaf jam, and other marvellous confections of the East. For the encouragement of the purchaser he inserts a lovely inlaid dagger into one of his jam-pots, and from thence into his own mouth, to convince us of the harmless nature of the unknown sweetmeats. This is so far satisfactory, but his disappointment is bitter indeed when we de-

cline a savoury morsel from the point of the same knife; and as he shows signs of tearing his gracefully-draped shawl into shreds (an Oriental expression of regret), we beat a hasty retreat. Red and blue woollen horse-collars inlaid with white shells, and the beaded trappings of donkeys have a street of their own, in which gorgeously-decorated scarlet saddles swing from the eaves. Then comes (oh, frightful anomaly!) a corridor of cheap china, petroleum-lamps, lacquer, and tin, all freshly imported from Birmingham, that commercial Inferno of prosaic ugliness which casts its black and dismal shadow far and wide over the fairest lands of East and West. Judging from the excited crowd gathered round the hideous productions of the grimy manufacturing centre, the leaven of evil already begins to work in the Asiatic mind, and the coarse, machine-made wares win universal admiration.

Our vexation is soothed by the pipe-bazaar, where every variety of hubble-bubble, meerschaum, and narghileh is to be found, including the pinewood pipes covered with fir-cones, which are one of the Broussa *spécialités*. The coppersmiths' bazaar displays wonderful dishes and culinary utensils to those travellers who can endure the deafening clamour and din. The shoe-bazaar shows a long vista of dangling scarlet and yellow slippers, as well as wooden clogs lined with pink leather, and decorated with straps of velvet and tinsel. The mysteries of oriental headgear may be studied in the turban-bazaar, full of the wonderful paraphernalia of cap, fez, veil, and turban, which protect Eastern heads from the ardent sun. Among water-coolers and pitchers of rude earthenware, but of artistic shape, exquisite brazen trays stand filled with tiny coffee-cups, painted or set with turquoise, and inserted in filigree of gold or silver. Delicious scents of attar of rose from pharmacy and drug-store mingle with unpoetic odours from strings of gigantic onions and drying herbs. Cobwebby muslins, silver embroidery inlaid with turquoise, and veils sparkling with tinsel, jostle Manchester prints and calicoes; and among Mahometan books, in quaint Turkish characters, stand hideous oleographs of Western manufacture and crudest colouring. The spoils of East and West are mingled, greatly to the disadvantage of the latter.

The scent of late roses and ripe fruit lures us into a side street of such poetical beauty that we might suppose the flowery garlands and vine-wreathed grape-baskets arranged by trained artists rather than by mere Asiatic peasants. Stumbling over

mounds of rosy pomegranates and green melons, we dive through an avenue of orange and lemon boughs to refresh ourselves in the street of the sherbet-sellers, who rattle their copper cups and shout at us in stentorian tones which our guide interprets as 'Drink, and cheer thy heart.' We gladly accede to the welcome exhortation, for sherbet of lemon and rose-water cooled by Olympian snows is not to be despised under an Asiatic sun. Peasants and farmers throng the grain-bazaar, a somewhat primitive corn exchange, filled with sacks overflowing with wheat, rice, and millet. Women, with creels on their backs, barter their loads of vegetables at a stall where provisions, cooked and uncooked, stand in miscellaneous confusion. Fish is frizzling, coffee being ground, and huge dishes of pilau are handed about into which fingers and wooden spoons are indiscriminately dipped on every side. Bakers are carrying about trays of flat bread, smoking hot from the oven, and the cries of the lemonade-sellers resound in every street, where syrups, liquorice-water, and tamarind-juice are pressed at every moment on the passengers. Even the butchers' shops are amusing from the extraordinary manner in which the meat is cut up for sale; the heads of the animals in close proximity to their curiously-jointed anatomy, and often decorated with green boughs or pink paper streamers. Everybody must buy the local manufactures in the Broussa bazaar, and, laden with pipes, veils, mule-trappings, and gauzes, we tear ourselves away. For a time exit is impossible, but a string of donkeys, laden with grapes, at length clears the way. We follow the last elaborately-plaited tail, and thus reach the open street. Every arch and aperture even here frames a brilliant Eastern picture, where merchants sit and smoke over their costly bales in the dim interior, or drowsy groups doze in the dusky shadows, while the hot sun blazes on street and pavement.

A large building, brilliantly lighted from within, attracts attention: we enter a deep porch, to find ourselves within the Jewish synagogue, crowded with worshippers, singing Hebrew psalms to a wild melody as they rock to and fro, having so far imported Mahometan custom into the Hebrew creed. Reverence is at a discount: men talk and laugh, and a crowd of boys chatter and knock each other about, unreproved by the rabbi, who conducts the service from a desk beneath a seven-branched candlestick filled with twinkling lights. The women occupy a latticed gallery, themselves unseen. We are warmly welcomed—in fact, the service stops until we are accommodated with arm-chairs,

evidently intended for some Hebrew dignitaries—but the position is too conspicuous, and the gravity of the juvenile Hebrew too easily upset for our equanimity to be undisturbed; so with a pantomime of thanks to the chief rabbi we take our departure, amid a general titter from the very indevout congregation. It is the eve of a great Jewish feast, and the whole population of the Hebrew quarter seems contained in the synagogue, for we walk through perfectly empty streets to the main thoroughfare of the city. We afterwards visit the sulphur-baths of Broussa, which are famous throughout Asia Minor, and differ curiously from the bathing establishments of Europe. Through spacious halls, of varying degrees of heat, we walk over shoe-tops in warm water to the domed chamber containing the great central spring of boiling sulphur. These numerous fountains of mineral-charged water point to the prehistoric times when Olympus was a volcano containing those terrible forces which have receded so far beneath the earth's crust as to become beneficent agencies, restoring health instead of destroying life. The choking sulphur-fumes fill the hall with a dense fog. Entrance is impossible for those not gradually prepared by baths of increasing heat and vapour for an atmosphere which is otherwise insupportable; but through the curling smoke we see crowds of women and children standing or lying about in all directions. The costume, elementary and sketchy in the other departments, has here become *nil*. The only variety seen is in the different shades which go to make up human complexions. A few negresses, and some ladies of bright copper hue, form the deeper tones of colour, which shows every shade of orange, yellow, brown, and white. Some drink coffee and loll on divans, twisting a red scarf or an orange kerchief round their hair to protect it from the discolouring sulphur. Others sit on the brim of the sulphur-springs or paddle about on the wet stone floors. The ladies in the inner sanctum eagerly invite us to enter. All are quite unconcerned by our presence and their own *dêshabille*, and a merry crowd rushes forward with intense amusement at the choking of our unaccustomed lungs in the suffocating steam, trying to prevent our hasty departure.

The manners and customs of Asia are certainly somewhat primitive, but Eve in the early days of Paradise could not be more unconscious of her lack of garments than these simple and childlike natives of the East. From the baths we go to the silk-factories, which form the great local industry. The lovely silks

and gauzes seen in the bazaar are woven on the spot, for Broussa abounds in mulberry-groves and silkworms. Every stage of the silk-weaving may be seen in the factories, from the washing of the cocoons and the winding of the soft, yellow masses of silk, to the production of those fairy fabrics of which Oriental looms alone seem to know the secrets. The women, with their bright robes and dark glowing faces, lend a touch of romance even to the prosaic routine of a factory, as their slender brown hands dart with lightning swiftness among the golden silks of varying shades, from deepest orange to palest primrose. One fears that the all-pervading influence of Europe must soon destroy the picturesque surroundings of local manufactures; for even in far-away Broussa an Italian colony is already establishing itself, and gradually appropriating the silk trade. Eastern indolence and Western energy play into each other's hands, and Europe is quick to receive what Asia is so slack to retain. The famous wines of Broussa are also falling into foreign hands, and the fruitful vineyards which climb the terraced hills are becoming the property of prosaic Western speculators. High farming and machinery will soon reduce the charms of Broussa to that dead level of uniformity which has already done so much to blight the beauty of the world, and it is a matter of self-gratulation to have seen the lovely city before the change begins. From the fort above the town the crimson sunset lights up plain and mountain. Olympus changes from blue to amethyst, and from amethyst to indigo. Pink clouds lie like a shower of rose-leaves on the snowy summit, and the city beneath us reflects the afterglow in the golden hues which steal over mosque and minaret. From the wooden balcony of a vine-wreathed café we look down on the shifting colour of the winding streets. The Turkish Governor rides past on a caracoling charger. Some veiled ladies are carried after him in a curtained litter, accompanied by running footmen in glittering livery. The rank and fashion of Broussa come out to breathe the evening air. An adventurous Englishman, surrounded by a strong guard of Turkish soldiers—a necessary escort to Olympus—attracts evident admiration as he rides up the street on his return from the brigand-haunted mountain. The song of the muleteers and the tinkling of camel-bells float upwards, as the evening call to prayer resounds from the countless minarets. The stolid frequenters of the little café pause for a moment from their occupations of coffee-drinking, smoking, and playing draughts, and a murmur of 'Allah-il-Allah' breaks

their usual silence. We seem transported into a world far distant from that which we usually inhabit, and the unanswerable question recurs to mind as to the compensating gains of our higher civilisation for the loss of so much that is beautiful in the form and colour of primitive life.

Long before the sun rises in the eastern heavens, we leave the towers and cupolas of Broussa far behind us. The clear sky is full of the white light of earliest dawn, and the heavy dew weighs down olive-bough and fig-tree as though drenched with days of rain. A delicious breeze fans us with its balmy breath, and, as we turn for a last glimpse of the city and its guardian mountain, the roseate clouds stretch like wings across the clear azure of the sky, and the rising sun bathes dome and minaret, wall and tower, in a flood of carmine glory, as though an enchanted wand had been waved over the scene to give us a farewell vision of magic beauty by which to remember our visit to Broussa.

THE WHITE COMPANY.

BY A. CONAN DOYLE,

AUTHOR OF 'MICAH CLARKE.'

CHAPTER XXXVI.

HOW SIR NIGEL TOOK THE PATCH FROM HIS EYE.

It was a cold bleak morning in the beginning of March, and the mist was drifting in dense rolling clouds through the passes of the Cantabrian mountains. The Company, who had passed the night in a sheltered gully, were already astir, some crowding round the blazing fires and others romping or leaping over each other's backs, for their limbs were chilled and the air biting. Here and there, through the dense haze which surrounded them, there loomed out huge pinnacles and jutting boulders of rock; while high above the sea of vapour there towered up one gigantic peak, with the pink glow of the early sunshine upon its snow-capped head. The ground was wet, the rocks dripping, the grass and evergreens sparkling with beads of moisture; yet the camp was loud with laughter and merriment, for a messenger had ridden in from the prince with words of heart-stirring praise for what they had done, and with orders that they should still bide in the forefront of the army.

Round one of the fires were clustered four or five of the leading men of the archers, cleaning the rust from their weapons, and glancing impatiently from time to time at a great pot which smoked over the blaze. There was Aylward squatting cross-legged in his shirt, while he scrubbed away at his chain-mail brigandine, whistling loudly the while. On one side of him sat old Johnston, who was busy in trimming the feathers of some arrows to his liking; and on the other Hordle John, who lay with his great limbs all asprawl, and his headpiece balanced upon his uplifted foot. Black Simon of Norwich crouched amid the rocks, crooning an Eastland ballad to himself, while he whetted his sword upon a flat stone which lay across his knees; while beside him sat Alleyne Edricson, and Norbury, the silent squire of Sir Oliver, holding out their chilled hands towards the crackling faggots.

'Cast on another culpon, John, and stir the broth with thy

sword-sheath,' growled Johnston, looking anxiously for the twentieth time at the reeking pot.

'By my hilt!' cried Aylward, 'now that John hath come by this great ransom, he will scarce abide the fare of poor archer lads. How say you, camarade? When you see Hordle once more, there will be no penny ale and fat bacon, but Gascon wines and baked meats every day of the seven.'

'I know not about that,' said John, kicking his helmet up into the air and catching it in his hand. 'I do but know that whether the broth be ready or no, I am about to dip this into it.'

'It simmers and it boils,' cried Johnston, pushing his hard-lined face through the smoke. In an instant the pot had been plucked from the blaze, and its contents had been scooped up in half a dozen steel head-pieces, which were balanced betwixt their owners' knees, while, with spoon and with gobbet of bread, they devoured their morning meal.

'It is ill weather for bows,' remarked John at last, when, with a long sigh, he had drained the last drop from his helmet. 'My strings are as limp as a cow's tail this morning.'

'You should rub them with water glue,' quoth Johnston. 'You remember, Samkin, that it was wetter than this on the morning of Crécy, and yet I cannot call to mind that there was aught amiss with our strings.'

'It is in my thoughts,' said Black Simon, still pensively grinding his sword, 'that we may have need of your strings ere sundown. I dreamed of the red cow last night.'

'And what is this red cow, Simon?' asked Alleyne.

'I know not, young sir; but I can only say that on the eve of Cadsand, and on the eve of Crécy, and on the eve of Nogent, I dreamed of a red cow; and now the dream has come upon me again, so I am now setting a very keen edge to my blade.'

'Well said, old war-dog!' cried Aylward. 'By my hilt! I pray that your dream may come true, for the prince hath not set us out here to drink broth or to gather whortleberries. One more fight, and I am ready to hang up my bow, marry a wife, and take to the fire corner. But how now, Robin? Whom is it that you seek?'

'The Lord Loring craves your attendance in his tent,' said a young archer to Alleyne.

The squire rose and proceeded to the pavilion, where he found the knight seated upon a cushion, with his legs crossed in front

of him and a broad ribbon of parchment laid across his knees, over which he was poring with frowning brows and pursed lips.

'It came this morning by the prince's messenger,' said he, 'and was brought from England by Sir John Fallislee, who is new come from Sussex. What make you of this upon the outer side?'

'It is fairly and clearly written,' Alleyne answered, 'and it signifies "To Sir Nigel Loring, Knight, Constable of Twynham Castle, by the hand of Christopher, the servant of God at the Priory of Christchurch."'

'So I read it,' said Sir Nigel. 'Now I pray you to read what is set forth within.'

Alleyne turned to the letter, and, as his eyes rested upon it, his face turned pale and a cry of surprise and grief burst from his lips.

'What then?' asked the knight, peering up at him anxiously. 'There is nought amiss with the Lady Mary or with the Lady Maude?'

'It is my brother—my poor unhappy brother!' cried Alleyne, with his hand to his brow. 'He is dead.'

'By Saint Paul! I have never heard that he had shown so much love for you that you should mourn him so.'

'Yet he was my brother—the only kith or kin that I had upon earth. Mayhap he had cause to be bitter against me, for his land was given to the abbey for my upbringing. Alas! alas! and I raised my staff against him when last we met! He has been slain—and slain, I fear, amidst crime and violence.'

'Ha!' said Sir Nigel. 'Read on, I pray you.'

'"God be with thee, my honoured lord, and have thee in his holy keeping. The Lady Loring hath asked me to set down in writing what hath befallen at Twynham, and all that concerns the death of thy ill neighbour, the Socman of Minstead. For when ye had left us, this evil man gathered around him all outlaws, villeins, and masterless men, until they were come to such a force that they slew and scattered the king's men who went against them. Then, coming forth from the woods, they laid siege to thy castle, and for two days they girt us in and shot hard against us, with such numbers as were a marvel to see. Yet the Lady Loring held the place stoutly, and on the second day the Socman was slain—by his own men, as some think—so that we were delivered from their hands; for which praise be to all the saints, and more especially to the holy Anselm, upon whose feast it came

to pass. The Lady Loring, and the Lady Maude, thy fair daughter, are in good health; and so also am I, save for an imposthume of the toe-joint, which hath been sent me for my sins. May all the saints preserve thee!"'

'It was the vision of the Lady Tiphaine,' said Sir Nigel, after a pause. 'Marked you not how she said that the leader was one with a yellow beard, and how he fell before the gate. But how came it, Alleyne, that this woman, to whom all things are as crystal, and who hath not said one word which has not come to pass, was yet so led astray as to say that your thoughts turned to Twynham Castle even more than mine own.'

'My fair lord,' said Alleyne, with a flush on his weather-stained cheeks, 'the Lady Tiphaine may have spoken sooth when she said it; for Twynham Castle is in my heart by day and in my dreams by night.'

'Ha!' cried Sir Nigel, with a sidelong glance.

'Yes, my fair lord; for indeed I love your daughter, the Lady Maude; and, unworthy as I am, I would yet give my heart's blood to serve her.'

'By St. Paul! Edricson,' said the knight coldly, arching his eyebrows, 'you aim high in this matter. Our blood is very old.'

'And mine also is very old,' answered the squire.

'And the Lady Maude is our single child. All our name and lands centre upon her.'

'Alas! that I should say it, but I also am now the only Edricson.'

'And why have I not heard this from you before, Alleyne? In sooth, I think that you have used me ill.'

'Nay, my fair lord, say not so; for I know not whether your daughter loves me, and there is no pledge between us.'

Sir Nigel pondered for a few moments, and then burst out a-laughing. 'By St. Paul!' said he, 'I know not why I should mix in the matter; for I have ever found that the Lady Maude was very well able to look to her own affairs. Since first she could stamp her little foot, she hath ever been able to get that for which she craved; and if she set her heart on thee, Alleyne, and thou on her, I do not think that this Spanish king, with his three-score thousand men, could hold you apart. Yet this I will say, that I would see you a full knight ere you go to my daughter with words of love. I have ever said that a brave lance should wed her; and, by my soul! Edricson, if God spare you, I think

that you will acquit yourself well. But enough of such trifles, for we have our work before us, and it will be time to speak of this matter when we see the white cliffs of England once more. Go to Sir William Felton, I pray you, and ask him to come hither, for it is time that we were marching. There is no pass at the further end of the valley, and it is a perilous place should an enemy come upon us.'

Alleyne delivered his message, and then wandered forth from the camp, for his mind was all in a whirl with this unexpected news, and with his talk with Sir Nigel. Sitting upon a rock, with his burning brow resting upon his hands, he thought of his brother, of their quarrel, of the Lady Maude in her bedraggled riding-dress, of the grey old castle, of the proud pale face in the armoury, and of the last fiery words with which she had sped him on his way. Then he was but a penniless monk-bred lad, unknown and unfriended. Now he was himself Socman of Minstead, the head of an old stock, and the lord of an estate which, if reduced from its former size, was still ample to preserve the dignity of his family. Further, he had become a man of experience, was counted brave among brave men, had won the esteem and confidence of her father, and, above all, had been listened to by him when he told him the secret of his love. As to the gaining of knighthood, in such stirring times it was no great matter for a brave squire of gentle birth to aspire to that honour. He would leave his bones among these Spanish ravines, or he would do some deed which would call the eyes of men upon him.

Alleyne was still seated on the rock, his griefs and his joys drifting swiftly over his mind like the shadow of clouds upon a sunlit meadow, when of a sudden he became conscious of a low deep sound which came booming up to him through the fog. Close behind him he could hear the murmur of the bowmen, the occasional bursts of hoarse laughter, and the champing and stamping of their horses. Behind it all, however, came that low-pitched deep-toned hum, which seemed to come from every quarter and to fill the whole air. In the old monastic days he remembered to have heard such a sound when he had walked out one windy night at Bucklershard, and had listened to the long waves breaking upon the shingly shore. Here, however, was neither wind nor sea, and yet the dull murmur rose ever louder and stronger out of the heart of the rolling sea of vapour. He turned and ran to the camp, shouting an alarm at the top of his voice.

It was but a hundred paces, and yet ere he had crossed it every bowman was ready at his horse's head, and the group of knights were out and listening intently to the ominous sound.

'It is a great body of horse,' said Sir William Felton, 'and they are riding very swiftly hitherwards.'

'Yet they must be from the prince's army,' remarked Sir Richard Causton, 'for they come from the north.'

'Nay,' said the Earl of Angus, 'it is not so certain; for the peasant with whom we spoke last night said that it was rumoured that Don Tello, the Spanish king's brother, had ridden with six thousand chosen men to beat up the prince's camp. It may be that on their backward road they have come this way.'

'By St. Paul!' cried Sir Nigel, 'I think that it is even as you say, for that same peasant had a sour face and a shifting eye, as one who bore us little goodwill. I doubt not that he has brought these cavaliers upon us.'

'But the mist covers us,' said Sir Simon Burley. 'We have yet time to ride through the further end of the pass.'

'Were we a troop of mountain goats we might do so,' answered Sir William Felton, 'but it is not to be passed by a company of horsemen. If these be indeed Don Tello and his men, then we must bide where we are, and do what we may to make them rue the day that they found us in their path.'

'Well spoken, William!' cried Sir Nigel, in high delight. 'If there be so many as has been said, then there will be much honour to be gained from them and every hope of advancement. But the sound has ceased, and I fear that they have gone some other way.'

'Or mayhap they have come to the mouth of the gorge, and are marshalling their ranks. Hush and hearken! for they are no great way from us.'

The Company stood peering into the dense fog-wreath, amidst a silence so profound that the dripping of the water from the rocks and the breathing of the horses grew loud upon the ear. Suddenly from out the sea of mist came the shrill sound of a neigh, followed by a long blast upon a bugle.

'It is a Spanish call, my fair lord,' said Black Simon. 'It is used by their prickers and huntsmen when the beast hath not fled, but is still in its lair.'

'By my faith!' said Sir Nigel, smiling, 'if they are in a humour for venerie we may promise them some sport ere they

sound the mort over us. But there is a hill in the centre of the gorge on which we might take our stand.'

'I marked it yester-night,' said Felton, 'and no better spot could be found for our purpose, for it is very steep at the back. It is but a bow-shot to the left, and, indeed, I can see the shadow of it.'

'The whole Company, leading their horses, passed across to the small hill which loomed in front of them out of the mist. It was indeed admirably designed for defence, for it sloped down in front, all jagged and boulder-strewn, while it fell away behind in a sheer cliff of a hundred feet or more. On the summit was a small, uneven plateau, with a stretch across of a hundred paces, and a depth of half as much again.

'Unloose the horses!' said Sir Nigel. 'We have no space for them, and if we hold our own we shall have horses and to spare when this day's work is done. Nay, keep yours, my fair sirs, for we may have work for them. Aylward, Johnston, let your men form a harrow on either side of the ridge. Sir Oliver and you, my Lord Angus, I give you the right wing, and the left to you, Sir Simon, and to you Sir Richard Causton. I and Sir William Felton will hold the centre with our men-at-arms. Now order the ranks, and fling wide the banners, for our souls are God's and our bodies the king's, and our swords for Saint George and for England!'

Sir Nigel had scarcely spoken when the mist seemed to thin in the valley, and to shred away into long ragged clouds which trailed from the edges of the cliffs. The gorge in which they had camped was a mere wedge-shaped cleft among the hills, three-quarters of a mile deep, with the small rugged rising upon which they stood at the further end, and the brown crags walling it in on three sides. As the mist parted, and the sun broke through, it gleamed and shimmered with dazzling brightness upon the armour and headpieces of a vast body of horsemen who stretched across the barranca from one cliff to the other, and extended backwards until their rear-guard were far out upon the plain beyond. Line after line, and rank after rank, they choked the neck of the valley with a long vista of tossing pennons, twinkling lances, waving plumes and streaming banderoles, while the curvets and gambades of the chargers lent a constant motion and shimmer to the glittering many-coloured mass. A yell of exultation, and a forest of waving steel through the length and breadth of their

column, announced that they could at last see their entrapped enemies, while the swelling notes of a hundred bugles and drums, mixed with the clash of Moorish cymbals, broke forth into a proud peal of martial triumph. Strange it was to these gallant and sparkling cavaliers of Spain to look upon this handful of men upon the hill, the thin lines of bowmen, the knot of knights and men-at-arms with armour rusted and discoloured from long service, and to learn that these were indeed the soldiers whose fame and prowess had been the camp-fire talk of every army in Christendom. Very still and silent they stood, leaning upon their bows, while their leaders took counsel together in front of them. No clang of bugle rose from their stern ranks, but in the centre waved the leopards of England, on the right the ensign of the Company with the roses of Loring, and on the left, over three score of Welsh bowmen, there floated the red banner of Merlin with the boars'-heads of the Buttesthorns. Gravely and sedately they stood beneath the morning sun waiting for the onslaught of their foemen.

'By Saint Paul!' said Sir Nigel, gazing with puckered eye down the valley, 'there appear to be some very worthy people among them. What is this golden banner which waves upon the left?'

'It is the ensign of the Knights of Calatrava,' answered Felton.

'And the other upon the right?'

'It marks the Knights of Santiago, and I see by his flag that their grand-master rides at their head. There too is the banner of Castile amid yonder sparkling squadron which heads the main battle. There are six thousand men-at-arms with ten squadrons of slingers, as far as I may judge their numbers.'

'There are Frenchmen among them, my fair lord,' remarked Black Simon. 'I can see the pennons of De Couvette, De Brieux, Saint Pol, and many others who struck in against us for Charles of Blois.'

'You are right,' said Sir William, 'for I can also see them. There is much Spanish blazonry also, if I could but read it. Don Diego, you know the arms of your own land. Who are they who have done us this honour?'

The Spanish prisoner looked with exultant eyes upon the deep and serried ranks of his countrymen.

'By Saint James!' said he, 'if ye fall this day ye fall by no

mean hands, for the flower of the knighthood of Castile ride under the banner of Don Tello, with the chivalry of Asturias, Toledo, Leon, Cordova, Galicia, and Seville. I see the guidons of Albornez, Caçorla, Rodriguez, Tavora, with the two great orders, and the knights of France and of Aragon. If you will take my rede you will come to a composition with them, for they will give you such terms as you have given me.'

'Nay, by Saint Paul! it were pity if so many brave men were drawn together, and no little deed of arms to come of it. Ha! William, they advance upon us; and, by my soul! it is a sight that is worth coming over the seas to see.'

As he spoke, the two wings of the Spanish host, consisting of the Knights of Calatrava on the one side and of Santiago upon the other, came swooping swiftly down the valley, while the main body followed more slowly behind. Five hundred paces from the English the two great bodies of horse crossed each other, and, sweeping round in a curve, retired in feigned confusion towards their centre. Often in bygone wars had the Moors tempted the hot-blooded Spaniards from their places of strength by such pretended flights, but there were men upon the hill to whom every ruse and trick of war were as their daily trade and practice. Again and even nearer came the rallying Spaniards, and again with cry of fear and stooping bodies they swerved off to right and left, but the English still stood stolid and observant among their rocks. The vanguard halted a long bow-shot from the hill, and with waving spears and vaunting shouts challenged their enemies to come forth, while two cavaliers, pricking forward from the glittering ranks, walked their horses slowly between the two arrays with targets braced and lances in rest like the challengers in a tourney.

'By Saint Paul!' cried Sir Nigel, with his one eye glowing like an ember, 'these appear to be two very worthy and debonair gentlemen. I do not call to mind when I have seen any people who seemed of so great a heart and so high of enterprise. We have our horses, Sir William: shall we not relieve them of any vow which they may have upon their souls?'

Felton's reply was to bound upon his charger, and to urge it down the slope, while Sir Nigel followed not three spears'-lengths behind him. It was a rugged course, rocky and uneven, yet the two knights, choosing their men, dashed onwards at the top of their speed, while the gallant Spaniards flew as swiftly to meet

them. The one to whom Felton found himself opposed was a tall stripling with a stag's head upon his shield, while Sir Nigel's man was broad and squat, with plain steel harness, and a pink and white torse bound round his helmet. The first struck Felton on the target with such force as to split it from side to side, but Sir William's lance crashed through the camail which shielded the Spaniard's throat, and he fell, screaming hoarsely, to the ground. Carried away by the heat and madness of fight, the English knight never drew rein, but charged straight on into the array of the Knights of Calatrava. Long time the silent ranks upon the hill could see a swirl and eddy deep down in the heart of the Spanish column, with a circle of rearing chargers and flashing blades. Here and there tossed the white plume of the English helmet, rising and falling like the foam upon a wave, with the fierce gleam and sparkle ever circling round it, until at last it had sunk from view, and another brave man had turned from war to peace.

Sir Nigel meanwhile had found a foeman worthy of his steel, for his opponent was none other than Sebastian Gomez, the picked lance of the monkish Knights of Santiago, who had won fame in a hundred bloody combats with the Moors of Andalusia. So fierce was their meeting that their spears shivered up to the very grasp, and the horses reared backwards until it seemed that they must crash down upon their riders. Yet with consummate horsemanship they both swung round in a long curvet, and then plucking out their swords they lashed at each other like two lusty smiths hammering upon an anvil. The chargers spun round each other, biting and striking, while the two blades wheeled and whizzed and circled in gleams of dazzling light. Cut, parry, and thrust followed so swiftly upon each other that the eye could not follow them, until at last, coming thigh to thigh, they cast their arms round each other and rolled off their saddles to the ground. The heavier Spaniard threw himself upon his enemy, and pinning him down beneath him raised his sword to slay him, while a shout of triumph rose from the ranks of his countrymen. But the fatal blow never fell, for even as his arm quivered before descending, the Spaniard gave a shudder, and stiffening himself rolled heavily over upon his side, with the blood gushing from his armpit and from the slit of his vizor. Sir Nigel sprang to his feet with his bloody dagger in his left hand and gazed down upon his adversary, but that fatal and sudden stab in the vital spot, which the Spaniard had exposed by raising his arm, had proved instantly

mortal. The Englishman leaped upon his horse and made for the hill, at the very instant that a yell of rage from a thousand voices and the clang of a score of bugles announced the Spanish onset.

But the islanders were ready and eager for the encounter. With feet firmly planted, their sleeves rolled back to give free play to their muscles, their long yellow bow-staves in their left hands, and their quivers slung to the front, they had waited in the four-deep harrow formation which gave strength to their array, and yet permitted every man to draw his arrow freely without harm to those in front. Aylward and Johnston had been engaged in throwing light tufts of grass into the air to gauge the wind force, and a hoarse whisper passed down the ranks from the file-leaders to the men, with scraps of advice and admonition.

'Do not shoot outside the fifteen-score paces,' cried Johnston. 'We may need all our shafts ere we have done with them.'

'Better to overshoot than to undershoot' added Aylward. 'Better to strike the rear guard than to feather a shaft in the earth.'

'Loose quick and sharp when they come,' added another. 'Let it be the eye to the string, the string to the shaft, and the shaft to the mark. By Our Lady! their banners advance, and we must hold our ground now if ever we are to see Southampton Water again.'

Alleyne, standing with his sword drawn amidst the archers, saw a long toss and heave of the glittering squadrons. Then the front ranks began to surge slowly forward, to trot, to canter, to gallop, and in an instant the whole vast array was hurtling onward, line after line, the air full of the thunder of their cries, the ground shaking with the beat of their hoofs, the valley choked with the rushing torrent of steel, topped by the waving plumes, the slanting spears and the fluttering banderoles. On they swept over the level and up to the slope, ere they met the blinding storm of the English arrows. Down went whole ranks in a whirl of mad confusion, horses plunging and kicking, bewildered men falling, rising, staggering on or back, while ever new lines of horsemen came spurring through the gaps and urged their chargers up the fatal slope. All around him Alleyne could hear the stern short orders of the master-bowmen, while the air was filled with the keen twanging of the strings and the swish and patter of the shafts. Right across the foot of the hill there had sprung up a

long wall of struggling horses and stricken men, which ever grew and heightened as fresh squadrons poured on the attack. One young knight on a grey jennet leaped over his fallen comrades and galloped swiftly up the hill, shrieking loudly upon Saint James, ere he fell within a spear-length of the English line, with the feathers of arrows thrusting out from every crevice and joint of his armour. So for five long minutes the gallant horsemen of Spain and of France strove ever and again to force a passage, until the wailing note of a bugle called them back, and they rode slowly out of bow-shot, leaving their best and their bravest in the ghastly blood-mottled heap behind them.

But there was little rest for the victors. Whilst the knights had charged them in front the slingers had crept round upon either flank and had gained a footing upon the cliffs and behind the outlying rocks. A storm of stones broke suddenly upon the defenders, who, drawn up in lines upon the exposed summit, offered a fair mark to their hidden foes. Johnston, the old archer, was struck upon the temple and fell dead without a groan, while fifteen of his bowmen and six of the men-at-arms were struck down at the same moment. The others lay on their faces to avoid the deadly hail, while at each side of the plateau a fringe of bowmen exchanged shots with the slingers and crossbowmen among the rocks, aiming mainly at those who had swarmed up the cliffs, and bursting into laughter and cheers when a well-aimed shaft brought one of their opponents toppling down from his lofty perch.

'I think, Nigel' said Sir Oliver, striding across to the little knight, 'that we should all acquit ourselves better had we our none-meat, for the sun is high in the heaven.'

'By Saint Paul!' quoth Sir Nigel, plucking the patch from his eye, 'I think that I am now clear of my vow, for this Spanish knight was a person from whom much honour might be won. Indeed, he was a very worthy gentleman, of good courage, and great hardiness, and it grieves me that he should have come by such a hurt. As to what you say of food, Oliver, it is not to be thought of, for we have nothing with us upon the hill.'

'Nigel!' cried Sir Simon Burley, hurrying up with consternation upon his face, 'Aylward tells me that there are not ten-score arrows left in all their sheaves. See! they are springing from their horses, and cutting their sollerets that they may rush upon us. Might we not even now make a retreat?'

'My soul will retreat from my body first!' cried the little knight. 'Here I am, and here I bide, while God gives me strength to lift a sword.'

'And so say I!' shouted Sir Oliver, throwing his mace high into the air and catching it again by the handle.

'To your arms, men!' roared Sir Nigel. 'Shoot while you may, and then out sword, and let us live or die together!'

CHAPTER XXXVII.

HOW THE WHITE COMPANY CAME TO BE DISBANDED.

THEN uprose from the hill in the rugged Calabrian valley a sound such as had not been heard in those parts before, nor was again, until the streams which rippled amid the rocks had been frozen by over four hundred winters and thawed by as many returning springs. Deep and full and strong it thundered down the ravine, the fierce battle-call of a warrior race, the last stern welcome to whoso should join with them in that world-old game where the stake is death. Thrice it swelled forth and thrice it sank away, echoing and reverberating amidst the crags. Then, with set faces, the Company rose up among the storm of stones, and looked down upon the thousands who sped swiftly up the slope against them. Horse and spear had been set aside, but on foot, with sword and battle-axe, their broad shields slung in front of them, the chivalry of Spain rushed to the attack.

And now arose a struggle so fell, so long, so evenly sustained, that even now the memory of it is handed down amongst the Calabrian mountaineers, and the ill-omened knoll is still pointed out by fathers to their children as the 'Altura de los Inglesos,' where the men from across the sea fought the great fight with the knights of the south. The last arrow was quickly shot, nor could the slingers hurl their stones, so close were friend and foe. From side to side stretched the thin line of the English, lightly armed and quick-footed, while against it stormed and raged the pressing throng of fiery Spaniards and of gallant Bretons. The clink of crossing sword-blades, the dull thudding of heavy blows, the panting and gasping of weary and wounded men, all rose together in a wild long-drawn note, which swelled upwards to the ears of the wondering peasants who looked down from the edges of the

cliffs upon the swaying turmoil of the battle beneath them. Back and forward reeled the leopard banner, now borne up the slope by the rush and weight of the onslaught, now pushing downwards again as Sir Nigel, Burley, and Black Simon, with their veteran men-at-arms, flung themselves madly into the fray. Alleyne, at his lord's right hand, found himself swept hither and thither in the desperate struggle, exchanging savage thrusts one instant with a Spanish cavalier, and the next torn away by the whirl of men and dashed up against some new antagonist. To the right Sir Oliver, Aylward, Hordle John, and the bowmen of the Company fought furiously against the monkish Knights of Santiago, who were led up the hill by their prior—a great deep-chested man, who wore a brown monastic habit over his suit of mail. Three archers he slew in three giant strokes, but Sir Oliver flung his arms round him, and the two, staggering and straining, reeled backwards and fell, locked in each other's grasp, over the edge of the steep cliff which flanked the hill. In vain his knights stormed and raved against the thin line which barred their path: the sword of Aylward and the great axe of John gleamed in the forefront of the battle; and huge jagged pieces of rock, hurled by the strong arms of the bowmen, crashed and hurtled amid their ranks. Slowly they gave back down the hill, the archers still hanging upon their skirts, with a long litter of writhing and twisted figures to mark the course which they had taken. At the same instant the Welshmen upon the left, led on by the Scotch earl, had charged out from among the rocks which sheltered them, and by the fury of their outfall had driven the Spaniards in front of them in headlong flight down the hill. In the centre only things seemed to be going ill with the defenders. Black Simon was down—dying, as he would wish to have died, like a grim old wolf in its lair—with a ring of his slain around him. Twice Sir Nigel had been overborne, and twice Alleyne had fought over him until he had staggered to his feet once more. Burley lay senseless, stunned by a blow from a mace, and half of the men-at-arms lay littered upon the ground around him. Sir Nigel's shield was broken, his crest shorn, his armour cut and smashed, and the vizor torn from his helmet; yet he sprang hither and thither with light foot and ready hand, engaging two Bretons and a Spaniard at the same instant—thrusting, stooping, dashing in, springing out—while Alleyne still fought by his side, stemming with a handful of men the fierce tide which surged up against

them. Yet it would have fared ill with them had not the archers from either side closed in upon the flanks of the attackers, and pressed them very slowly and foot by foot down the long slope, until they were on the plain once more, where their fellows were already rallying for a fresh assault.

But terrible indeed was the cost at which the last had been repelled. Of the three hundred and seventy men who had held the crest, one hundred and seventy-two were left standing, many of whom were sorely wounded and weak from loss of blood. Sir Oliver Buttesthorn, Sir Richard Causton, Sir Simon Burley, Black Simon, Johnston, a hundred and fifty archers, and forty-seven men-at-arms had fallen, while the pitiless hail of stones was already whizzing and piping once more about their ears, threatening every instant to further reduce their numbers.

Sir Nigel looked about him at his shattered ranks, and his face flushed with a soldier's pride.

'By St. Paul!' he cried, 'I have fought in many a little bickering, but never one that I would be more loth to have missed than this. But you are wounded, Alleyne?'

'It is nought,' answered his squire, staunching the blood which dripped from a sword-cut across his forehead.

'These gentlemen of Spain seem to be most courteous and worthy people. I see that they are already forming to continue this debate with us. Form up the bowmen two deep instead of four. By my faith! some very brave men have gone from among us. Aylward, you are a trusty soldier, for all that your shoulder has never felt accolade, nor your heels worn the gold spurs. Do you take charge of the right; I will hold the centre, and you, my Lord of Angus, the left.'

'Ho! for Sir Samkin Aylward!' cried a rough voice among the archers, and a roar of laughter greeted their new leader.

'By my hilt!' said the old bowman, 'I never thought to lead a wing in a stricken field. Stand close, camarades, for, by these finger-bones! we must play the man this day.'

'Come hither, Alleyne,' said Sir Nigel, walking back to the edge of the cliff which formed the rear of their position. 'And you, Norbury,' he continued, beckoning to the squire of Sir Oliver, 'do you also come here.'

The two squires hurried across to him, and the three stood looking down into the rocky ravine which lay a hundred and fifty feet beneath them.

'The prince must hear of how things are with us,' said the knight. 'Another onfall we may withstand, but they are many and we are few, so that the time must come when we can no longer form line across the hill. Yet if help were brought us we might hold the crest until it comes. See yonder horses which stray among the rocks beneath us?'

'I see them, my fair lord.'

'And see yonder path which winds along the hill upon the further end of the valley?'

'I see it.'

'Were you on those horses, and riding up yonder track, steep and rough as it is, I think that ye might gain the valley beyond. Then on to the prince, and tell him how we fare.'

'But, my fair lord, how can we hope to reach the horses?' asked Norbury.

'Ye cannot go round to them, for they would be upon ye ere ye could come to them. Think ye that ye have heart enough to clamber down this cliff?'

'Had we but a rope.'

'There is one here. It is but one hundred feet long, and for the rest ye must trust to God and to your fingers. Can you try it, Alleyne?'

'With all my heart, my dear lord, but how can I leave you in such a strait?'

'Nay, it is to serve me that ye go. And you, Norbury?'

The silent squire said nothing, but he took up the rope, and, having examined it, he tied one end firmly round a projecting rock. Then he cast off his breastplate, thighpieces, and greaves, while Alleyne followed his example.

'Tell Chandos, or Calverley, or Knolles, should the prince have gone forward,' cried Sir Nigel. 'Now may God speed ye, for ye are brave and worthy men.'

It was, indeed, a task which might make the heart of the bravest sink within him. The thin cord dangling down the face of the brown cliff seemed from above to reach little more than halfway down it. Beyond stretched the rugged rock, wet and shining, with a green tuft here and there thrusting out from it, but little sign of ridge or foothold. Far below the jagged points of the boulders bristled up, dark and menacing. Norbury tugged thrice with all his strength upon the cord, and then lowered himself over the edge, while a hundred anxious faces peered over

at him as he slowly clambered downwards to the end of the rope. Twice he stretched out his foot, and twice he failed to reach the point at which he aimed, but even as he swung himself for a third effort a stone from a sling buzzed like a wasp from amid the rocks and struck him full upon the side of his head. His grasp relaxed, his feet slipped, and in an instant he was a crushed and mangled corpse upon the sharp ridges beneath him.

'If I have no better fortune,' said Alleyne, leading Sir Nigel aside, 'I pray you, my dear lord, that you will give my humble service to the Lady Maude, and say to her that I was ever her true servant and most unworthy cavalier.'

The old knight said no word, but he put a hand on either shoulder, and kissed his squire, with the tears shining in his eyes. Alleyne sprang to the rope, and, sliding swiftly down, soon found himself at its extremity. From above it seemed as though rope and cliff were well-nigh touching, but now, when swinging a hundred feet down, the squire found that he could scarce reach the face of the rock with his foot, and that it was as smooth as glass, with no resting-place where a mouse could stand. Some three feet lower, however, his eye lit upon a long jagged crack which slanted downwards, and this he must reach if he would save not only his own poor life, but that of the eight score men above him. Yet it were madness to spring for that narrow slit with nought but the wet smooth rock to cling to. He swung for a moment, full of thought, and even as he hung there another of the hellish stones sang through his curls, and struck a chip from the face of the cliff. Up he clambered a few feet, drew up the loose end after him, unslung his belt, held on with knee and with elbow while he spliced the long tough leathern belt to the end of the cord; then lowering himself as far as he could go, he swung backwards and forwards until his hand reached the crack, when he left the rope and clung to the face of the cliff. Another stone struck him on the side, and he heard a sound like a breaking stick, with a keen stabbing pain which shot through his chest. Yet it was no time now to think of pain or ache. There was his lord and his eight score comrades, and they must be plucked from the jaws of death. On he clambered, with his hands shuffling down the long sloping crack, sometimes bearing all his weight upon his arms, at others finding some small shelf or tuft on which to rest his foot. Would he never pass over that fifty feet? He dared not look down, and could but grope slowly

onwards, his face to the cliff, his fingers clutching, his feet scraping and feeling for a support. Every vein and crack and mottling of that face of rock remained for ever stamped upon his memory. At last, however, his foot came upon a broad resting-place and he ventured to cast a glance downwards. Thank God! he had reached the highest of those fatal pinnacles upon which his comrade had fallen. Quickly now he sprang from rock to rock until his feet were on the ground, and he had his hand stretched out for the horse's rein, when a sling-stone struck him on the head, and he dropped senseless upon the ground.

An evil blow it was for Alleyne, but a worse one still for him who struck it. The Spanish slinger, seeing the youth lie slain, and judging from his dress that he was no common man, rushed forward to plunder him, knowing well that the bowmen above him had expended their last shaft. He was still three paces, however, from his victim's side when John upon the cliff above plucked up a huge boulder, and, poising it for an instant, dropped it with fatal aim upon the slinger beneath him. It struck upon his shoulder, and hurled him, crushed and screaming, to the ground, while Alleyne, recalled to his senses by these shrill cries in his very ear, staggered on to his feet, and gazed wildly about him. His eyes fell upon the horses, grazing upon the scanty pasture, and in an instant all had come back to him—his mission, his comrades, the need for haste. He was dizzy, sick, faint, but he must not die, and he must not tarry, for his life meant many lives that day. In an instant he was in his saddle and spurring down the valley. Loud rang the swift charger's hoofs over rock and reef, while the fire flew from the stroke of iron, and the loose stones showered up behind him. But his head was whirling round, the blood was gushing from his brow, his temple, his mouth. Ever keener and sharper was the deadly pain which shot like a red-hot arrow through his side. He felt that his eye was glazing, his senses slipping from him, his grasp upon the reins relaxing. Then, with one mighty effort, he called up all his strength for a single minute. Stooping down, he loosened the stirrup-straps, bound his knees tightly to his saddle-flaps, twisted his hands in the bridle, and then, putting the gallant horse's head for the mountain path, he dashed the spurs in and fell forward fainting with his face buried in the coarse black mane.

Little could he ever remember of that wild ride. Half con-

scious, but ever with the one thought beating in his mind, he goaded the horse onwards, rushing swiftly down steep ravines, over huge boulders, along the edges of black abysses. Dim memories he had of beetling cliffs, of a group of huts with wondering faces at the doors, of foaming, clattering water, and of a bristle of mountain beeches. Once, ere he had ridden far, he heard behind him three deep sullen shouts, which told him that his comrades had set their faces to the foe once more. Then all was blank, until he woke to find kindly blue English eyes peering down upon him and to hear the blessed sound of his country's speech.

They were but a foraging party—a hundred archers and as many men-at-arms—but their leader was Sir Hugh Calverley, and he was not a man to bide idle when good blows were to be had not three leagues from him. A scout was sent flying with a message to the camp, and Sir Hugh, with his two hundred men, thundered off to the rescue. With them went Alleyne, still bound to his saddle, still dripping with blood, and swooning and recovering, and swooning once again. On they rode, and on, until, at last, topping a ridge, they looked down upon the fateful valley. Alas! and alas! for the sight that met their eyes.

There, beneath them, was the blood-bathed hill, and from the highest pinnacle there flaunted the yellow and white banner with the lions and the towers of the royal house of Castile. Up the long slope rushed ranks and ranks of men—exultant, shouting, with waving pennons and brandished arms. Over the whole summit were dense throngs of knights, with no enemy that could be seen to face them, save only that at one corner of the plateau an eddy and swirl amid the crowded mass seemed to show that all resistance was not yet at an end. At the sight a deep groan of rage and of despair went up from the baffled rescuers, and, spurring on their horses, they clattered down the long and winding path which led to the valley beneath.

But they were too late to avenge, as they had been too late to save. Long ere they could gain the level ground, the Spaniards, seeing them riding swiftly amid the rocks, and being ignorant of their numbers, drew off from the captured hill, and, having secured their few prisoners, rode slowly in a long column, with drum-beating and cymbal-clashing, out of the valley. Their rear ranks were already passing out of sight ere the new-comers were urging their panting, foaming horses up the slope which had been the scene of that long-drawn and bloody fight.

And a fearsome sight it was that met their eyes! Across the lower end lay the dense heap of men and horses where the first arrow-storm had burst. Above, the bodies of the dead and the dying—French, Spanish, and Aragonese—lay thick and thicker, until they covered the whole ground two and three deep in one dreadful tangle of slaughter. Above them lay the Englishmen in their lines, even as they had stood, and higher yet upon the plateau a wild medley of the dead of all nations, where the last deadly grapple had left them. In the further corner, under the shadow of a great rock, there crouched seven bowmen, with great John in the centre of them—all wounded, weary, and in sorry case, but still unconquered, with their blood-stained weapons waving and their voices ringing a welcome to their countrymen. Alleyne rode across to John, while Sir Hugh Calverley followed close behind him.

'By Saint George!' cried Sir Hugh, 'I have never seen signs of so stern a fight, and I am right glad that we have been in time to save you.'

'You have saved more than us,' said John, pointing to the banner which leaned against the rock behind him.

'You have done nobly,' cried the old free companion, gazing with a soldier's admiration at the huge frame and bold face of the archer. 'But why is it, my good fellow, that you sit upon this man?'

'By the rood! I had forgot him,' John answered, rising and dragging from under him no less a person than the Spanish caballero, Don Diego Alvarez. 'This man, my fair lord, means to me a new house, ten cows, one bull—if it be but a little one—a grindstone, and I know not what beside; so that I thought it well to sit upon him, lest he should take a fancy to leave me.'

'Tell me, John,' cried Alleyne faintly, 'where is my dear lord, Sir Nigel Loring?'

'He is dead, I fear. I saw them throw his body across a horse and ride away with it, but I fear the life had gone from him.'

'Now woe worth me! And where is Aylward?'

'He sprang upon a riderless horse and rode after Sir Nigel to save him. I saw them throng around him, and he is either taken or slain.'

'Blow the bugles!' cried Sir Hugh, with a scowling brow. 'We must back to camp, and ere three days I trust that we may

see these Spaniards again. I would fain have ye all in my company.'

'We are of the White Company, my fair lord,' said John.

'Nay, the White Company is here disbanded,' answered Sir Hugh solemnly, looking round him at the lines of silent figures. 'Look to the brave squire, for I fear that he will never see the sun rise again.'

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

OF THE HOME-COMING TO HAMPSHIRE.

It was a bright July morning four months after that fatal fight in the Spanish barranca. A blue heaven stretched above, a green rolling plain undulated below, intersected with hedge-rows and flecked with grazing sheep. The sun was yet low in the heaven, and the red cows stood in the long shadow of the elms, chewing the cud and gazing with great vacant eyes at two horsemen who were spurring it down the long white road which dipped and curved away back to where the towers and pinnacles beneath the flat-topped hill marked the old town of Winchester.

Of the riders one was young, graceful, and fair, clad in plain doublet and hosen of blue Brussels cloth, which served to show his active and well-knit figure. A flat velvet cap was drawn forward to keep the glare from his eyes, and he rode with lips compressed and anxious face, as one who has much care upon his mind. Young as he was, and peaceful as was his dress, the dainty golden spurs which twinkled upon his heels proclaimed his knighthood, while a long seam upon his brow and a scar upon his temple gave a manly grace to his refined and delicate countenance. His comrade was a large red-headed man upon a great black horse, with a huge canvas bag slung from his saddle-bow, which jingled and clinked with every movement of his steed. His broad brown face was lighted up by a continual smile, and he looked slowly from side to side with eyes which twinkled and shone with delight. Well might John rejoice, for was he not back in his native Hampshire, had he not Don Diego's five thousand crowns rasping against his knee, and above all was he not himself squire now to Sir Alleyne Edricson, the young Socman of Minstead, lately knighted by the sword of the Black Prince himself, and

esteemed by the whole army as one of the most rising of the soldiers of England.

For the last stand of the Company had been told throughout Christendom wherever a brave deed of arms was loved, and honours had flowed in upon the few who had survived it. For two months Alleyne had wavered betwixt death and life, with a broken rib and a shattered head; yet youth and strength and a cleanly life were all upon his side, and he awoke from his long delirium to find that the war was over, that the Spaniards and their allies had been crushed at Navaretta, and that the prince had himself heard the tale of his ride for succour and had come in person to his bedside to touch his shoulder with his sword and to ensure that so brave and true a man should die, if he could not live, within the order of chivalry. The instant that he could set foot to ground Alleyne had started in search of his lord, but no word could he hear of him, dead or alive, and he had come home now sad-hearted in the hope of raising money upon his estates and so starting upon his quest once more. Landing at London, he had hurried on with a mind full of care, for he had heard no word from Hampshire since the short note which had announced his brother's death.

'By the rood!' cried John, looking around him exultantly, 'where have we seen since we left such noble cows, such fleecy sheep, grass so green, or a man so drunk as yonder rogue who lies in the gap of the hedge?'

'Ah, John,' Alleyne answered wearily, 'it is well for you, but I never thought that my home-coming would be so sad a one. My heart is heavy for my dear lord and for Aylward, and I know not how I may break the news to the Lady Mary and to the Lady Maude, if they have not yet had tidings of it.'

John gave a groan which made the horses shy. 'It is indeed a black business,' said he. 'But be not sad, for I shall give half these crowns to my old mother, and half will I add to the money which you may have, and so we shall buy that yellow cog wherein we sailed to Bordeaux, and in it we shall go forth and seek Sir Nigel.'

Alleyne smiled, but shook his head. 'Were he alive we should have had word of him ere now,' said he. 'But what is this town before us?'

'Why, it is Romsey!' cried John. 'See the tower of the old grey church, and the long stretch of the nunnery. But here

sits a very holy man, and I shall give him a crown for his prayers.'

Three large stones formed a rough cot by the roadside, and beside it, basking in the sun, sat the hermit, with clay-coloured face, dull eyes, and long withered hands. With crossed ankles and sunken head, he sat as though all his life had passed out of him, with the beads slipping slowly through his thin yellow fingers. Behind him lay the narrow cell, clay-floored and damp, comfortless, profitless and sordid. Beyond it there lay amid the trees the wattle-and-daub hut of a labourer, the door open, and the single room exposed to the view. The man, ruddy and yellow-haired, stood leaning upon the spade wherewith he had been at work upon the garden patch. From behind him came the ripple of a happy woman's laughter, and two young urchins darted forth from the hut, bare-legged and towsy, while the mother, stepping out, laid her hand upon her husband's arm and watched the gambols of the children. The hermit frowned at the untoward noise which broke upon his prayers, but his brow relaxed as he looked upon the broad silver piece which John held out to him.

'There lies the image of our past and of our future,' cried Alleyne, as they rode on upon their way. 'Now, which is better, to till God's earth, to have happy faces round one's knee, and to love and be loved, or to sit for ever moaning over one's own soul, like a mother over a sick babe?'

'I know not about that,' said John, 'for it casts a great cloud over me when I think of such matters. But I know that my crown was well spent, for the man had the look of a very holy person. As to the other, there was nought holy about him that I could see, and it would be cheaper for me to pray for myself than to give a crown to one who spent his days in digging for lettuces.'

Ere Alleyne could answer there swung round the curve of the road a lady's carriage drawn by three horses abreast with a postilion upon the outer one. Very fine and rich it was, with beams painted and gilt, wheels and spokes carved in strange figures, and over all an arched cover of red and white tapestry. Beneath its shade there sat a stout and elderly lady in a pink côte-hardie, leaning back among a pile of cushions, and plucking out her eyebrows with a small pair of silver tweezers. None could seem more safe and secure and at her ease than this lady, yet here also was a symbol of human life, for in an instant, even as Alleyne reined aside to let the carriage pass, a wheel flew out from among its

fellows, and over it all toppled—carving, tapestry and gilt—in one wild heap, with the horses plunging, the postilion shouting, and the lady screaming from within. In an instant Alleyne and John were on foot, and had lifted her forth all in a shake with fear, but little the worse for her mischance.

'Now woe worth me!' she cried, 'and ill fall on Michael Easover of Romsey! for I told him that the pin was loose, and yet he must needs gainsay me, like the foolish daffe that he is.'

'I trust that you have taken no hurt, my fair lady,' said Alleyne, conducting her to the bank, upon which John had already placed a cushion.

'Nay, I have had no scath, though I have lost my silver tweezers. Now, lack-a-day! did God ever put breath into such a fool as Michael Easover of Romsey? But I am much beholden to you, gentle sirs. Soldiers ye are, as one may readily see. I am myself a soldier's daughter,' she added, casting a somewhat languishing glance at John, 'and my heart ever goes out to a brave man.'

'We are indeed fresh from Spain,' quoth Alleyne.

'From Spain, say you? Ah! it was an ill and sorry thing that so many should throw away the lives that Heaven gave them. In sooth, it is bad for those who fall, but worse for those who bide behind. I have but now bid farewell to one who hath lost all in this cruel war.'

'And how that, lady?'

'She is a young damsel of these parts, and she goes now into a nunnery. Alack! it is not a year since she was the fairest maid from Avon to Itchen, and now it was more than I could abide to wait at Romsey Nunnery to see her put the white veil upon her face, for she was made for a wife and not for the cloister. Did you ever, gentle sir, hear of a body of men called "The White Company" over yonder?'

'Surely so,' cried both the comrades.

'Her father was the leader of it, and her lover served under him as squire. News hath come that not one of the Company was left alive, and so, poor lamb, she hath——'

'Lady!' cried Alleyne, with catching breath, 'is it the Lady Maude Loring of whom you speak?'

'It is, in sooth.'

'Maude! And in a nunnery! Did, then, the thought of her father's death so move her?'

'Her father!' cried the lady, smiling. 'Nay; Maude is a good daughter, but I think it was this young golden-haired squire of whom I have heard who has made her turn her back upon the world.'

'And I stand talking here!' cried Alleyne wildly. 'Come, John, come!'

Rushing to his horse, he swung himself into the saddle, and was off down the road in a rolling cloud of dust as fast as his good steed could bear him.

Great had been the rejoicing amid the Romsey nuns when the Lady Maude Loring had craved admission into their order—for was she not sole child and heiress of the old knight, with farms and fiefs which she could bring to the great nunnery? Long and earnest had been the talks of the gaunt lady abbess, in which she had conjured the young novice to turn for ever from the world, and to rest her bruised heart under the broad and peaceful shelter of the church. And now, when all was settled, and when abbess and lady superior had had their will, it was but fitting that some pomp and show should mark the glad occasion. Hence was it that the good burghers of Romsey were all in the streets, that gay flags and flowers brightened the path from the nunnery to the church, and that a long procession wound up to the old arched door, leading up the bride to these spiritual nuptials. There was lay-sister Agatha with the high gold crucifix, and the three incense-bearers, and the two-and-twenty garbed in white, who cast flowers upon either side of them and sang sweetly the while. Then, with four attendants, came the novice, her drooping head wreathed with white blossoms, and, behind, the abbess and her council of older nuns, who were already counting in their minds whether their own bailiff could manage the farms of Twynham, or whether a reeve would be needed beneath him, to draw the utmost from these new possessions which this young novice was about to bring them.

But alas! for plots and plans when love and youth and nature, and, above all, fortune are arrayed against them. Who is this travel-stained youth who dares to ride so madly through the lines of staring burghers? Why does he fling himself from his horse and stare so strangely about him? See how he has rushed through the incense-bearers, thrust aside lay-sister Agatha, scattered the two-and-twenty damosels who sang so sweetly—and he stands before the novice with his hands outstretched, and his face shining,

and the light of love in his grey eyes. Her foot is on the very lintel of the church, and yet he bars the way—and she, she thinks no more of the wise words and holy rede of the lady abbess, but she hath given a sobbing cry and hath fallen forward with his arms around her drooping body and her wet cheek upon his breast. A sorry sight this for the gaunt abbess, an ill lesson too for the stainless two-and-twenty who have ever been taught that the way of nature is the way of sin. But Maude and Alleyne care little for this. A dank cold air comes out from the black arch before them. Without, the sun shines bright and the birds are singing amid the ivy on the drooping beeches. Their choice is made, and they turn away hand-in-hand, with their backs to the darkness and their faces to the light.

Very quiet was the wedding in the old priory church at Christchurch, where Father Christopher read the service, and there were few to see save the Lady Loring and John, and a dozen bowmen from the castle. The Lady of Twynham had drooped and pined for weary months, so that her face was harsher and less comely than before, yet she still hoped on, for her lord had come through so many dangers that she could scarce believe that he might be stricken down at last. It had been her wish to start for Spain and to search for him, but Alleyne had persuaded her to let him go in her place. There was much to look after, now that the lands of Minstead were joined to those of Twynham, and Alleyne had promised her that if she would but bide with his wife he would never come back to Hampshire again until he had gained some news, good or ill, of her lord and lover.

The yellow cog had been engaged, with Goodwin Hawtayne in command, and a month after the wedding Alleyne rode down to Bucklershard to see if she had come round yet from Southampton. On the way he passed the fishing village of Pitt's Deep, and marked that a little creyer or brig was tacking off the land, as though about to anchor there. On his way back, as he rode towards the village, he saw that she had indeed anchored, and that many boats were round her, bearing cargo to the shore.

A bow-shot from Pitt's Deep there was an inn a little back from the road, very large and wide-spread, with a great green bush hung upon a pole from one of the upper windows. At this window he marked, as he rode up, that a man was seated who appeared to be craning his neck in his direction. Alleyne was still looking up at him, when a woman came rushing from the open door of the

inn, and made as though she would climb a tree, looking back the while with a laughing face. Wondering what these doings might mean, Alleyne tied his horse to a tree, and was walking amid the trunks towards the inn, when there shot from the entrance a second woman who made also for the trees. Close at her heels came a burly, brown-faced man, who leaned against the door-post and laughed loudly with his hand to his side.

'Ah, mes belles!' he cried, 'and is it thus you treat me? Ah, mes petites! I swear by these finger-bones that I would not hurt a hair of your pretty heads; but I have been among the black paynim, and, by my hilt! it does me good to look at your English cheeks. Come, drink a stoup of muscadine with me, mes anges, for my heart is warm to be among ye again.'

At the sight of the man Alleyne had stood staring, but at the sound of his voice such a thrill of joy bubbled up in his heart that he had to bite his lip to keep himself from shouting outright. But a deeper pleasure yet was in store. Even as he looked, the window above was pushed outwards, and the voice of the man whom he had seen there came out from it.

'Aylward,' cried the voice, 'I have seen just now a very worthy person come down the road, though my eyes could scarce discern whether he carried coat-armour. I pray you to wait upon him and to tell him that a very humble knight of England abides here, so that if he be in need of advancement, or have any small vow upon his soul, or desire to exalt his lady, I may help him to accomplish it.'

Aylward at this order came shuffling forward amid the trees, and in an instant the two men were clinging in each other's arms, laughing and shouting and patting each other in their delight; while old Sir Nigel came running with his sword, under the impression that some small bickering had broken out, only to embrace and be embraced himself, until all three were hoarse with their questions and outcries and congratulations.

On their journey home through the woods Alleyne learnt their wondrous story: how, when Sir Nigel came to his senses, he with his fellow-captive had been hurried to the coast, and conveyed by sea to their captor's castle; how upon the way they had been taken by a Barbary rover, and how they exchanged their light captivity for a seat on a galley bench and hard labour at the pirate's oars; how, in the port at Barbary, Sir Nigel had slain the Moorish captain, and had swum with Aylward to a small

coaster which they had taken, and so made their way to England with a rich cargo to reward them for their toils. All this Alleyne listened to, until the dark keep of Twynham towered above them in the gloaming, and they saw the red sun lying athwart the rippling Avon. No need to speak of the glad hearts at Twynham Castle that night, nor of the rich offerings from out that Moorish cargo which found their way to the chapel of Father Christopher.

Sir Nigel Loring lived for many years, full of honour and laden with every blessing. He rode no more to the wars, but he found his way to every jousting within thirty miles; and the Hampshire youth treasured it as the highest honour when a word of praise fell from him as to their management of their horses, or their breaking of their lances. So he lived and so he died, the most revered and the happiest man in all his native shire.

For Sir Alleyne Edricson and for his beautiful bride the future had also naught but what was good. Twice he fought in France, and came back each time laden with honours. A high place at court was given to him, and he spent many years at Windsor under the second Richard and the fourth Henry—where he received the honour of the Garter, and won the name of being a brave soldier, a true-hearted gentleman, and a great lover and patron of every art and science which refines or ennobles life.

As to John, he took unto himself a village maid, and settled in Lyndhurst, where his five thousand crowns made him the richest franklin for many miles around. For many years he drank his ale every night at the 'Pied Merlin,' which was now kept by his friend Aylward, who had wedded the good widow to whom he had committed his plunder. The strong men and the bowmen of the country round used to drop in there of an evening to wrestle a fall with John or to shoot a round with Aylward; but, though a silver shilling was to be the prize of the victor, it has never been reported that any man earned much money in that fashion. So they lived, these men, in their own lusty, cheery fashion—rude and rough, but honest, kindly and true. Let us thank God if we have outgrown their vices. Let us pray to God that we may ever hold their virtues. The sky may darken, and the clouds may gather, and again the day may come when Britain may have sore need of her children, on whatever shore of the sea they be found. Shall they not muster at her call?

THE END.

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